The Quality of Vocational Training

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SUMMARY

The mission letter, signed by the ministers responsible for labor and employment, national education, and vocational training, tasked the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs (IGAS) and the General Inspectorate of Education, Sport and Research (IGESR) with analyzing the quality assurance system for vocational training, assessing its impact and limitations, identifying the strengths and gaps in each of its components, and exploring the potential for coordination among them.

The mission first recalls that expectations regarding the quality of vocational training are increasingly high, due to the **economic and social stakes**—both collective and individual—traditionally associated with training. These demands are further heightened by the significant quantitative growth of the sector, driven by the full employment objective and by funding mechanisms such as the apprenticeship system, the Skills Investment Plan, and the Personal Training Account (Compte Personnel de Formation – CPF).
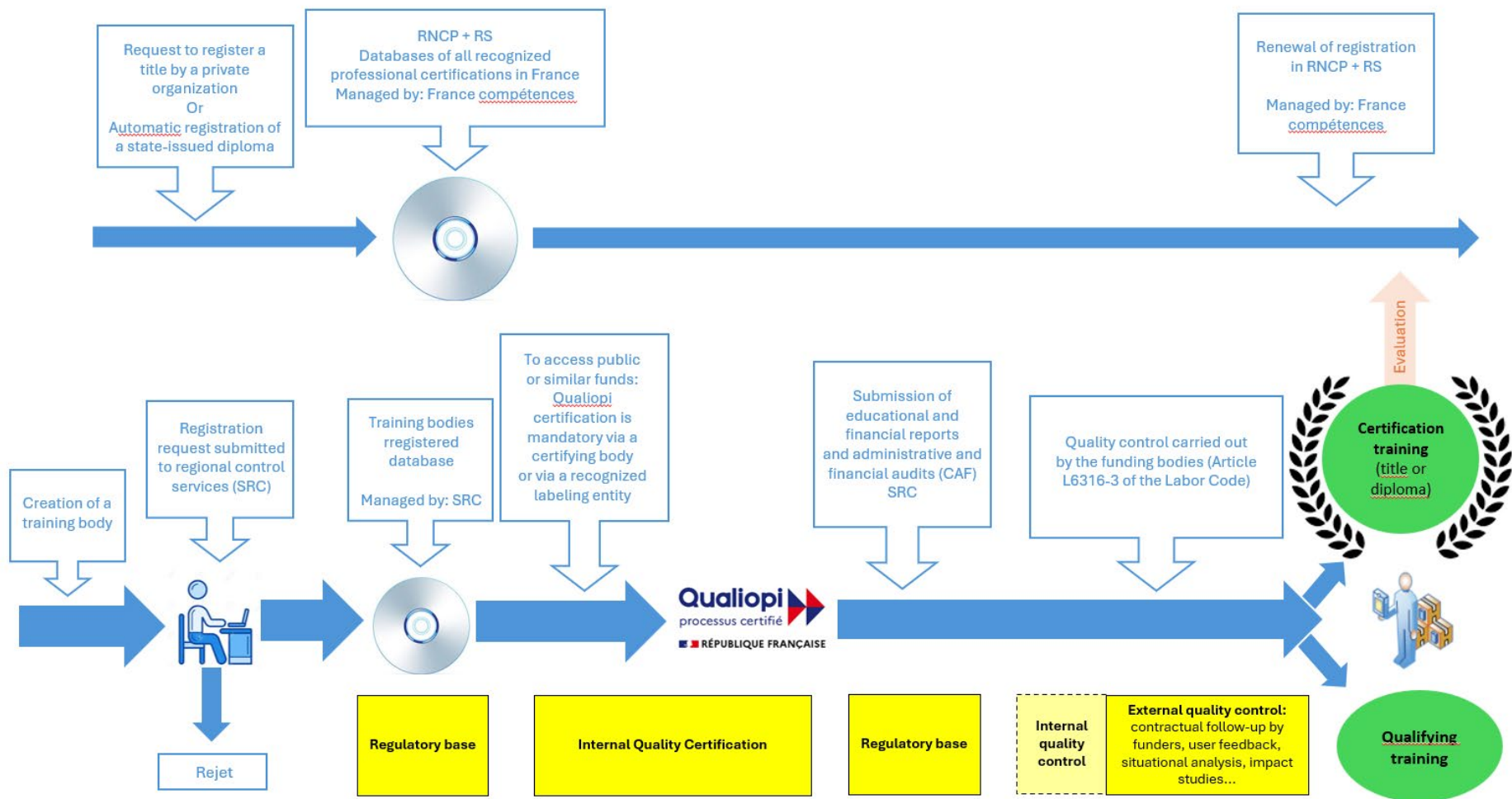
The mission began by establishing a shared definition of the concept of **quality**, distinguishing between:

- External quality: the characteristics of a product or service that allow it to fully meet the needs and expectations of clients. In this context, it includes learner satisfaction, assessment of learning outcomes, their application in the workplace, and ultimately the impact on work structures;
- Internal quality: the overall characteristics of an organization's processes and methods aimed at ensuring control and continuous improvement of its operations, which must be verified against a reference framework shared by the training ecosystem;
- Compliance with legal and regulatory obligations: these depend on the status of the training provider and the nature of funding received and serve as a safeguard against fraud.

According to this framework, the quality assurance system—which involves numerous actors including administrative and financial inspectors, certifying bodies accredited by the French Accreditation Committee (Cofrac), labeling organizations, funders, and training purchasers—is complex and lacks the scale and effectiveness needed to ensure its goals are fully achieved.

The mission sought to:

- Address shortcomings or deficiencies in each component of the quality assurance system;

- Identify ways to improve synergy across the system;

- Strengthen controls relating to external quality, which remain underdeveloped.

Request to register a title by a private organization
Or
Automatic registration of a state-issued diploma

RNCP + RS
Databases of all recognized professional certifications in France
Managed by: France compétences

Renewal of registration in RNCP + RS

Managed by: France compétences

Creation of a training body

Registration request submitted to regional control services (SRC)

Training bodies rregistered database

Managed by: SRC

To access public or similar funds: Qualiopi certification is mandatory via a certifying body or via a recognized labeling entity

Submission of educational and financial reports and administrative and financial audits (CAF) SRC

Quality control carried out by the funding bodies (Article L6316-3 of the Labor Code)

Evaluation

Certification training (title or diploma)

Rejet

Qualiopi processus certifié
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Regulatory base

Internal Quality Certification

Regulatory base

Internal quality control

External quality control: contractual follow-up by funders, user feedback, situational analysis, impact studies...

Qualifying training

Source :   mission

Within this context, **administrative controls**—although not focused directly on the quality of training—are well structured, despite inadequate resources, especially at the regional control office (SRC) level. These controls (e.g., service delivery checks by funders, administrative and financial audits by SRCs, and registration procedures on the "Mon Compte Formation" platform) serve as an initial safeguard against potentially fraudulent organizations.

Upstream, while the **certification of professional titles** does not itself evaluate training quality, the procedures for registering qualifications in the National Directory of Professional Certifications (RNCP) help to prevent poorly adapted training programs. However, post-certification oversight of certifying bodies remains very limited—particularly regarding their ability to monitor how authorized providers implement certification. The mission also found that oversight of apprenticeship training by certifiers is inconsistent across ministries and regions and limited in both scope and follow-up.

Introduced in 2018 and made mandatory as of January 1, 2022, **the requirement for training providers to be certified** (Qualiopi) to receive public or pooled funding serves a dual purpose: to certify the quality of the service delivery process implemented by training providers, and to enhance transparency for both individuals and companies seeking training. This requirement now applies to over 42,000 providers, compared to 5,500 with labels issued by one of eight specialized bodies. Despite early concerns that the Qualiopi certification might disrupt the training market—particularly by excluding small providers—the sector has largely remained intact, although providers had to make significant financial investments to cover audit costs and potentially hire consultants. However, practices among Qualiopi certifiers lack both oversight and supervision, opening the door to fraudulent behavior and inconsistencies. Furthermore, the national quality standard focuses on how training is designed, allowing for evaluation of pedagogical methods but not the actual instructional practices. The mission identified several areas that warrant clarification or increased rigor, including online training, support for apprentices in workplace integration, and accommodations for learners with disabilities. A survey commissioned by the mission and conducted by DARES and Céreq could not confirm that certification has improved the actual quality of training. Still, there appears to be a general adoption of quality procedures prompted by certification requirements, leading to evolving practices that will need further evaluation. Notably, the situation of subcontractors exempt from certification represents a major blind spot in the reform and should be urgently addressed.

Quality assessments conducted by funders rely on reference frameworks that closely resemble the Qualiopi standard. Currently, these allow for evaluation of training delivery processes (internal quality) more than of external quality. These oversight mechanisms remain underdeveloped, with limited capacity to detect issues, weak alert systems, and insufficient resources. However, external quality is somewhat addressed in contract specifications through follow-up monitoring by designated representatives (e.g., at Pôle emploi or regional councils) who conduct regular review meetings.

Evaluation of the impact of vocational training—a crucial aspect of external quality—remains underdeveloped. Aside from studies conducted by training providers themselves, only the InserJeunes system provides outcome tracking, and only for apprentices and high school graduates. Even then, impact evaluations focus narrowly on job placement rather than on job

trajectories, such as changes in qualification levels—which are, in fact, the core purpose of vocational training.

As for user feedback, although rating systems and general surveys exist, oversight agencies do not yet systematically use this data to conduct sector-specific quality analyses or to target inspections.

Finally, **coordination across quality control mechanisms** is in its infancy. Authorities responsible for verifying service delivery, conducting administrative and financial audits, and overseeing quality assurance operate independently, lacking a unified approach or integrated information systems. There is no shared alert system, nor any coordinated control programming.

In light of these findings, the mission recommends the **adoption of a target scenario to improve the effectiveness of each component of the quality assurance framework** while establishing a coordinated, system-wide management approach supported by better communication and cooperation tools.

This target scenario would include:

- Updating the Qualiopi certification standard to better reflect the diversity of training providers and their pedagogical methods, along with better oversight of certifying bodies;
- Standardizing the procedures for evaluating and registering titles and diplomas, and strengthening follow-up controls—particularly regarding pedagogical oversight in apprenticeships;
- Substantially increasing resources for legal, administrative, and financial oversight;
- Systematically monitoring compliance with contractual requirements set by purchasers in their calls for tenders;
- Establishing robust mechanisms for reporting and analyzing serious or recurring concerns about training quality—possibly triggering centralized inspections in high-risk situations;
- Harmonizing and strengthening quality audits conducted by training purchasers;
- More effectively incorporating impact evaluation data and stakeholder feedback into quality assurance processes;
- Creating systems for information sharing among oversight entities.

Given the scale of the issues, the complexity of vocational training quality assurance, and the large number of stakeholders involved, the mission believes it is essential to establish a central coordinating body—a role that is currently entirely absent.