Chapter 14

Lessons from the project "Employment Centres and Sustainable Development" in France

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In France, buildings consume more than 40% of all energy. Reducing this consumption is one of the main objectives of French climate change mitigation policies. This objective represents a major challenge for the construction sector, which needs to be ready to deliver buildings and renovations offering high energy performance. If current construction and renovation technologies are to deliver the expected results, they require specific skills that most building sector companies do not currently have. This skills gap is a strong obstacle to reaching the set objectives.

The project "Employment Centres and Sustainable Development", initiated by the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) and the association Alliance Villes Emploi ("Cities' Employment Alliance", a national network of local authorities working on employment, inclusion and training issues), is based upon this assessment. The project initiated an innovative approach to trigger stakeholders' mobilisation in order to better anticipate the effects of climate change mitigation policies on employment and skills across 33 territories.

French context and objectives for promoting a greener economy: Focus on the building sector

National strategy in the building sector to contribute to the EU 2020 targets

The fourth biggest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) in France, representing 25% of national emissions, the building sector is the largest energy consumer, with 42% of the final energy consumption in the country in 2008 (65% for residential and 35% for tertiary use).

Despite the gradual strengthening of thermal regulations for new buildings since the 1970s and more recently for existing buildings, GHG emissions have grown steadily (+15% since 1990). This can be explained by the strong increase in the park (+41% over the last 30 years) and by higher electricity consumption accompanying the development and use of electrical and electronic equipment (household and office appliances).

The potential energy savings in this area are large, but require increasing awareness and training on how to use and apply new means of regulation.

According to these challenges, the "Grenelle Environment" process has provided France with a new planning law that establishes goals and measures for reducing energy consumption in the building sector. This law additionally gives a major role to local authorities for climate change mitigation policies, both in their skills and in their areas of influence.

The Grenelle Law, published in August 2009, establishes measures and targets for reducing the energy consumption of and GHG emissions from new and existing buildings. It relies on the Grenelle Building Plan, launched in January 2009 and mobilising most, if not all, of the relevant actors from the building sector (institutions, local authorities, social landlords, construction professionals).

The Grenelle Law 1 relies on three fundamental levers:

1. The energy and thermal renovation of existing buildings to reduce their energy consumption by at least 38% by 2020. To do this, the law has set the following targets:
   - the complete renovation of at least 400 000 homes per year from 2013
   - to reduce the energy consumption of state buildings and of its public bodies by at least 40%, and the GHG emissions from these buildings by at least 50% by 2020 (territorial communities are encouraged to take the same objectives)
   - the renovation of all social housing units, starting with the rehabilitation of the 800 000 most energy consuming ones, by 2020 so as to reduce their consumption of primary energy to 150 kWh/m^2/year.
2. The reduction of energy consumption in new buildings by a gradual strengthening of the thermal regulation:
   - the generalisation of low-energy buildings, consuming on average 50 kWh/m^2/year of primary energy by 2010, in the case of public buildings, commercial buildings or housing as part of the ANRU (National Agency for Urban Renovation) programmes, and by 2012 for all other buildings

- the generalisation of energy-positive buildings, which produce more energy than they consume, by 2020 for all buildings.

3. The arrangement of necessary funding measures to support this work:
   - privileged loans envelopes
   - strengthening the tax credit for sustainable development.

National policies and strategies related to green skills and jobs in the building sector

In France, two main initiatives are framing the development of a green economy in the building sector:

- the "*Plan Bâtiment Grenelle*", which implements and co-ordinates the French government's programme to improve the energy performance of buildings
- the French "National plan for mobilisation of industries and territories towards a development of jobs and skills in a green economy" ("Green Skills Plan", 2009), developed by the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing.

These two plans work close together so that the expertise on green building can better serve the Green Skills Plan discussion about jobs and skills.

The "Green Skills Plan" identified 11 fields suitable for the development of a greener economy, representing half of the French working areas. One of these fields is the building sector. These strategic fields will have to face major changes in the coming years and therefore there is a strong need to anticipate and manage their transition to a greener economy.

In the building sector specifically, studies show that no massive job creation is to be expected from the transition to a greener economy. There will rather be a progressive and massive change in professional attitudes and skills, concerning all professions and activities, not only the ones related to the use of new technologies.

In renewable energy production in buildings, it was shown that skilled professionals are already lacking in the market, as are professors and trainers.

Consequently, a massive evolution has to take place in education and vocational training, as well as in policies for jobseekers, communication toward enterprises' management and other stakeholders, etc. In such a context, transversal skills will become crucial to allow jobseekers to skip more easily from one job to another. Nevertheless, professionals from the building sector are often reluctant to undertake/provide training, and their current working habits will need to evolve substantially to allow buildings to achieve good energy performances.

The skills gaps

With nearly 1.5 million workers and a very heterogeneous structure, the building sector is one of the most important economic sectors in France and has a significant potential for job creation.

The changes brought about by new thermal regulation and new construction and energy performance targets strongly impact the sector's construction habits and trades. The quantitative and qualitative changes required to achieve energy performance in buildings are posing important challenges to the sector's professionals and training, both initial and vocational, appears to be one of the major challenge for the success of Grenelle commitments.

Professionals have to learn to work differently and to better co-ordinate their work on construction sites together in order to achieve the desired overall energy performance. More precisely, the sector's professionals themselves have identified three main skills gaps:[1]

- From a technical point of view, professionals have to get used to new construction materials and new technologies.
- Builders also have to learn to work differently on construction sites and better co-ordinate their work. There is a need to develop a common working culture in order to achieve the required final energy performance of buildings, which will soon become mandatory.
- Finally, craftsmen and entrepreneurs should develop transposable management skills to be able to position themselves for new tenders, including energy efficiency requirements.

Education and continuing vocational training in the building sector: Frame and current needs

Since 1971, continuing professional development in France is a national obligation and "continuing vocational training" (CVT) relies on the requirement, for an employer, to financially contribute to public funds used to finance training for each employee, as well as the right, for the employee, to receive training during his work time.

In the building sector, the CVT is organised both at the national and regional levels. At the national level, it is managed by "Constructys" and "Pôle Emploi" (state organisation for employment). At the regional level, the requirements for professional training lay in the hands of the regional councils. The CVT can be delivered by private or public organisations such as the CAPEB Network, IFRB (*Institut de la Formation Régionale du Bâtiment*), AFPA, GRETAs, CCCA-BTP, or by in-house training services for large companies (e.g. Bouygues, Vinci, Eiffage, etc.).

A number of private initiatives have also been put in place to improve workers' skills in the building sector, among them:

- FEE Bat (training in energy efficiency for craftsmen and employees of building companies), a full training course developed by EDF, ADEME and professional federations (CAPEB, FFB, FN SCOP-BTP). It has trained 35 000 people over the last two and a half years.
- E-nergieBat, an online technical teaching resource centre dedicated to artisans and employees in the building sector set up by the CAH (*Club d'Amélioration de l'Habitat*) and ADEME. It provided technical information to several thousands of visitors.

- PRAXIBAT, a fieldwork-training platform for apprentices, designed by ADEME in some regions.

Increasing skills in this sector is also sought through enterprise qualification schemes, such as Qualit'Enr or Qualibat, which can be used by companies to promote the quality of their work among consumers and thus provide an interesting incentive for companies to train their workers.

Recent studies under the "Green Job Plan" estimate that 230 000 workers and craftsmen of the building sector need to be trained per year through 2020 if French environmental objectives are to be reached. This represents 130 000 working professionals and 100 000 new entrants (these figures were established by considering turnovers and changes in the sector's activity).

Innovative strategies for skills development and employment in France: The role of territories

In France, although employment is legally a state competency, local authorities have been involved for more than 20 years in the development of local employment strategies. This role was finally officially recognised in the Social Cohesion Planning Law of 2005.

Additionally, local authorities are also responsible for economic development and urban renovation, and regions and departments play a crucial role in training and inclusion policies.

As such, locally elected representatives are accountable to their citizens for their territory's economic development, employment, training and inclusion opportunities. They also find themselves in a strong position to shape policies and schemes that are the best fit for their territory's needs and opportunities.

For these reasons, we believe the local level is the most appropriate one for bringing about the changes required to foster a greener economy.

As seen in the first section, these changes are huge and diverse and they require transversal and integrated approaches; a role that French employment centres have proven able to fulfil.

"Employment centres": An effective collaborative tool to organise transitions in territories

Employment centres (*maisons de l'emploi*) are local organisations under the presidency of locally elected representatives, acting at the local level to federate all local employment and labour market actors within a single structure and around a single local employment promotion strategy.

They act within "employment areas"[2] and cover several local government spheres. The French Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity defines employment areas as the geographical space where the majority of the working population lives and works and from which companies satisfy their workforce needs. Partners seeking to create an employment centre then collectively define the employment area.

The French national "Social Cohesion Plan", adopted in June 2004, and the Social Cohesion Planning Law, introduced in January 2005, renewed the French government's approach to employment policy. Both pieces of legislation recognised the importance of local authorities in the promotion of employment and designated them as one of the

three main pillars of employment, along with the state and the Public Employment Service (*Pôle Emploi*). In addition, this approach sought to modernise and reorganise existing employment partnership models and establish a single framework for local employment development at the local level.

Employment centres were created out of the will to federate local employment actors within a single structure and around a single local employment promotion strategy. As a result, employment centres were established as a one-stop-service for jobseekers and employers gathering state public employment services, local governments and local employment development actors and partnerships under one roof. Through a bottom-up approach, partners elaborate employment promotion strategies adapted to the needs of their territories and populations.

Employment centres were first piloted in 1989 in select territories. In 2004, the French government's "Social Cohesion Plan" decided to spread the initiative to the whole country. Today there are 196 employment centres in France, represented in almost every French region. They are represented at the national level by the "Alliance Villes Emploi" ("Cities Employment Alliance"), a network of local authorities focused on employment, inclusion and training.

At the local level, they deliver the following services:

- Stakeholders' mobilisation: employment centres are places where territorial dialogue on employment, inclusion and training can take place and where joint projects can be elaborated and steered.
- Territorial integration and adaptation of policies and programmes: employment centres also aim to integrate and co-ordinate, within their territory, all policies and programmes related to employment and social inclusion in order to ensure territorial consistency.
- Territories' observation and monitoring in order to identify and seize local opportunities or anticipate specific risks or evolutions.
- Projects' engineering, both technical and financial, to be able to set up specific actions responding to specific identified needs.
- Expertise on social clauses in public tenders: Alliance Villes Emploi is also promoting, through its network, the use of social clauses in public tenders. It provides training and resources to staff of employment centres on this topic.
- Information, orientation and counselling: **b**asic information on employment opportunities and mechanisms, as well as different resources are provided to job-seekers in some employment centres.

As such, employment centres can act locally as strong catalysts for mobilising stakeholders and provide an appropriate framework in which to develop concrete and integrated solutions to territories' needs**.**

Building up integrated solutions for territories

With this array of skills, employment centres try to conceive territory-based responses to specific challenges, such as a factory closing down, the setting up of a new industry or the implementation of a new project in their territory, etc.

In order to meet these challenges, they try to organise local responses by: organising specific training sessions for jobseekers in order to meet recruiters' needs when a new project or industry plans to open in the territory; working closely with local enterprises and industries in order to anticipate economic evolutions and their consequences on jobs and skills locally; looking for conversion opportunities for employees after a factory closes down, etc.

This "provisional management of jobs and skills" (*Gestion prévisionnelle des emplois et des compétences*) is based on observations made by the territories, close relationships and a constant dialogue with all economic actors. It has proven to be a powerful means by which to anticipate and better manage economic transitions in territories.

The project "Employment Centres and Sustainable Development": Anticipating skills and employment challenges of environmental transitions in the building sector

Project methodology: Stakeholders' mobilisation and collective action at the local scale

Aware that the environmental objectives set by the "Grenelle" for the building sector will not be reached unless an appropriate transition towards a greener economy, skills and jobs takes place, the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) and the association "Alliance Villes Emploi" decided in 2008 to work closely together in order to better anticipate these challenges.

The local arena was considered by both organisations to be the appropriate one to carry out such reflections and actions, for several reasons. Firstly, it is now recognised that, if climate change is a global concern, GHG emissions have to be reduced locally and territories have been recognised as being an important actor of climate change mitigation strategies.

It was also becoming obvious at that time that the "Grenelle" general objectives and measures needed to be adapted locally, but also, and most importantly, to be appropriated by local stakeholders. Local actors' involvement and mobilisation around these objectives seemed absolutely necessary for change to occur.

In other words, the top-town and centralised approach that prevailed in the Grenelle process in France (which proved to be very successful for launching a proactive policy for climate change reduction and to set binding agreements in law at the national level) needed to be complemented by a bottom-up approach.

It was for these reasons that in 2008, ADEME and "Alliance Villes Emploi" decided to launch an initial experiment in three "employment development areas" (the cities of Bayonne, Nancy and Lille) to test an innovative methodology for mobilising stakeholders around Grenelle issues and the resulting consequences on jobs and skills. The project's approach and methodology was then extended in 2010 to 30 additional territories, with further extensions expected.

The project relies on employment centres and the regional directions of ADEME, with each playing the following roles:

- Employment centres are responsible for mobilising stakeholders and participative consultation in their territory.

- Regional directions of ADEME provide the environmental and sector expertise in order to frame the work carried out by partners.

The first year of the project was dedicated to:

- Identifying and mobilising all relevant stakeholders and partners in the projects' territory.
- Setting up a vast and representative steering committee responsible for deciding and framing projects' local orientations.
- Carrying out a study on local markets, skills and employment options in the building sector (carried out by an external organisation), based upon a vast compilation of quantitative data on buildings, as well as on a qualitative survey of enterprises to better understand their current expectations.
- Organising participative meetings and working groups to share the study's results, to comment on and discuss them in order to elaborate a shared diagnosis of the situation among local stakeholders.
- Based upon these shared diagnoses, elaborate a joint action plan to tackle skills and employment transitions locally.

Project's main achievements

This methodology gathered together all of the relevant stakeholders from employment, training and the building sector in order to work collaboratively and plan for upcoming challenges and ways to adapt skills and jobs to meet the Grenelle requirements. Additionally, they jointly planned concrete and relevant actions to tackle sustainable development issues locally.

Across the 33 territories, more than 1 300 people attended local participative working groups, bringing their specific expertise and professional cultures to enrich the project's analysis and action plans.

It also enabled participants to create linkages, synergies and working habits between actors from very different professional sectors. This newly built local partnership is an important added-value for the project locally and will enable them to better meet the anticipated challenges and opportunities.

Another important achievement of the project was to share diagnoses among stakeholders and encourage them to agree upon a common understanding of the situation. This forms the basis of collective actions and led to the elaboration and implementation of joint action plans in 33 territories.

Joint action plans to "green" local skills and jobs

Employment centres and their partners in the 33 territories, representing approximately 500 local actions and acting at 4 main levels, are currently implementing 33 local action plans:

- Awareness-raising and information campaigns to communicate about jobs and skills evolutions in the sector, targeting: works contractors, companies and their employees, jobseekers and labour market institutions.

- Adaptation and access to training for these different actors, especially for companies' managers and craftsmen.
- Support to enterprises' development and organisation to progress towards improved services in line with energy performance or renewable energy businesses.
- Promotion of local development strategies around new activities to be found in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy in buildings.

Implementation of these actions began in September 2011, led either by the local employment centre or one of its partners. Their follow-up and monitoring is being organised by "Alliance Villes Emploi". A national evaluation was carried out in 2012 by ADEME with the aim of assessing these projects' impact on accelerating the implementation of the Grenelle.

Some lessons can already be drawn from this project, in particular regarding the importance of local actions in the field of climate change mitigation and the role of local authorities in organising jobs and skills transitions towards a greener economy.

Conclusion and policy implications

First, this project shows that, in the field of climate change mitigation and sustainable development, national policies can only be effective through local appropriation and implementation by all relevant stakeholders. Local adaptation of national schemes has to be organised systematically.

Second, stakeholders' mobilisation is a key issue for the success of these policies and has to be effectively organised in territories. This can be highly facilitated by the existence, at the local level, of a strong political will and a legitimate organisation able to play this role. In the case of France, employment centres proved to be the appropriate actors to fulfil this mission.

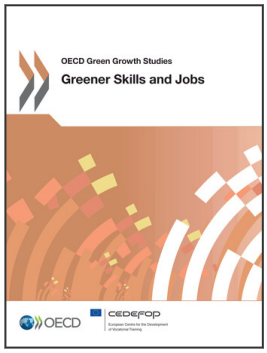
The role of elected representatives to catalyse local mobilisation and gather very different stakeholders around a shared and meaningful project is also crucial. The shift towards a green economy will bring substantial changes for people and territories and the construction of a collective project is an essential condition for the transition's success.

Responsibilities should also be clearly assigned between the projects' partners to ensure the credibility of proposed actions. This is the role of a representative and neutral steering committee.

Finally, another success factor lies in the elaboration of a shared diagnosis among stakeholders. Based upon an objective study, professionals from very different fields discussed and jointly agreed upon common conclusions and shared views on current gaps and challenges ahead. This may seem very time consuming but is a very necessary step to unlock professionals' anticipations.

Notes

1. Observations made by the sector's workers during the project's participative phase.
2. In French: *bassin d'emploi*. Employment areas are defined by the French Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Solidarity as the geographical space where the majority of the working population lives and works, and from which companies satisfy their workforce needs. The precise definition of each employment area is collectively defined by the partners seeking to create an employment centre.



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