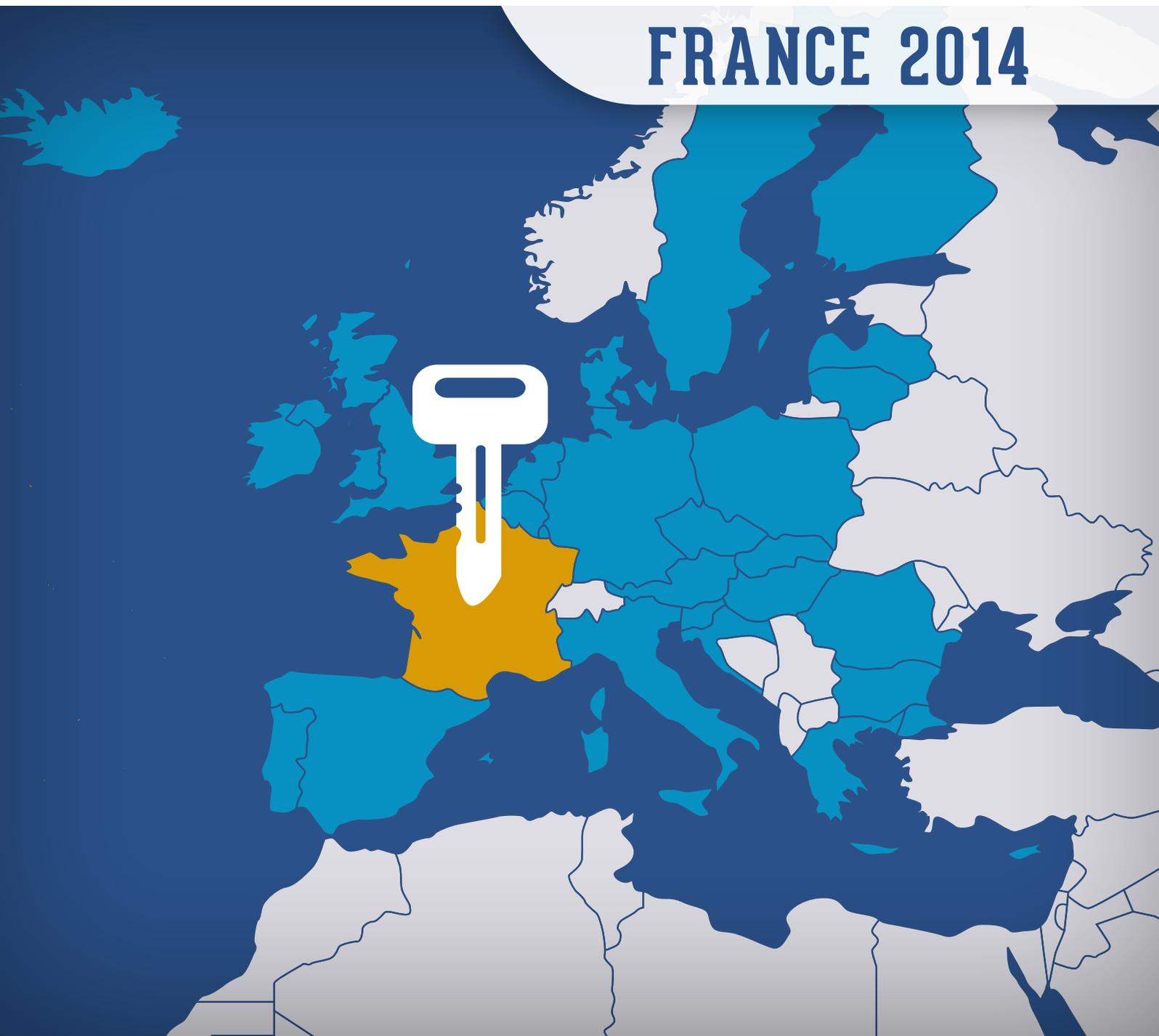


COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FRANCE 2014



<http://keyconet.eun.org>



SHORT SUMMARY

Providing a national description contextualizing key competence development in your country [rationale, objectives etc.]:

KCD in France is an issue linked to the development of the socle commun (core curriculum of knowledge and competence) rather than a topic in itself. The socle commun (introduced by law in 2005) is composed of 7 major competences largely inspired by the European Key Competences, each broken down into knowledge, skills and attitude.

After a process of consultation involving all stakeholders over several months, a new education act, “loi d’orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l’école de la République”, was adopted in July 2013.

Concerning Key Competences, the words of knowledge and competences are complemented by the idea of “culture”. A new official body, the “conseil supérieur des programmes”, was launched in October 2013, and is in charge of translating the principles of the law in principles for the curriculum and in detailed syllabus for each level of education.

In June 2014, this body published a blueprint “projet de socle commun”, which put the idea of “culture commune” (shared or common culture) at the heart of the French curriculum. The “culture commune” is designed as the product of knowledge and competences.

Further proceedings should change the way competences are assessed, which has been an issue of tension in the development of competences in compulsory schooling (especially in secondary schools).

KCD INITIATIVES:

What relevant key competence related initiatives (e.g. curricular reform/national strategy/pilot project/public consultation etc. in relation to students’ curricula and assessment, teacher training, school organisation, and learning resources) have taken place in your country over the past five years, and which are planned in the future? You may also refer here to the 2012 case notes produced for your country, and any other initiatives which will be the focus of the 2013 case notes.

Global national strategy: implementation of the socle commun from 2005, with changes to the curriculum of compulsory schooling.

Assessment of student outcomes in primary (CE1 and CM2) and secondary schools (end of lower secondary education), using a tool known as the ‘personal competences booklet’ to be filled in by teachers. The former Minister of Education (Benoît Hamon) has launched a national conference about the assessment of students (“conférence nationale sur l’évaluation des élèves”) November - December 2014, focused on positive assessment – positive assessment means that the students are encouraged: what they know is valued and they can see



how they can make more progress – rather than specifically on the assessment of key competences. The two topics are however strongly linked.

Production of educational resources to enable the implementation and assessment of competences, in particular for competences 1 to 5 (French; foreign languages; mathematics, science and technology; digital competence; humanities), that match competences closer to the traditional school disciplines.

Although initial teacher training takes into account the socle commun, little support in terms of in-service training has been given to teachers already working in schools. This is partly due to lack of financial means but also due to the lack of qualified trainers and suitable resources. Teacher training will now take place in the ESPE (“écoles nationales supérieures du professorat et de l’éducation”) that were launched in September 2013, but it’s too early to know the changes that could happen knowing that ESPE took the following of the former IUFM.

Implementation of the common core did not entail an upheaval of school organisations but was instead brought about through local changes in schools and teaching, such as experiments and innovative projects. Of these it is particularly worth noting the following:

- Efforts to work in interdisciplinary teams.
- Implementation of new assessment methods or tools (with or without grades).
- Introduction of project-based learning in some areas of teaching.
- Greater use of digital tools.
- The new education act, “*loi d’orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l’école de la République*”, was adopted in July 2013.
- In June 2014, the blueprint “projet de socle commun” was published.



OVERALL KCD APPROACH:

How would you characterise the overall approach to key competence development in your country? Is it a holistic approach characterised by an overarching strategy, or rather a targeted approach focusing on one or more specific dimension of the education system (student curriculum, assessment, teacher training, school organisation, learning resources etc.)? Does it cover formal and non-formal learning, both primary and secondary school levels?

The KCD approach in France is a global one, because the socle commun covers the two levels of compulsory schooling (primary and lower-secondary education).

Assessment of competences should be included in ordinary schooling. Teaching staff should validate or certify proficiency of the socle commun at the end of compulsory schooling, with regard to students’ learning. Studies indicate that such assessment is easier for competences linked to specific disciplines than for cross-curricular competences.

Except for some innovative projects (e.g. experimental booklet of competences for guidance), assessment only addresses formal education.

KEY COMPETENCES ADDRESSED:

Is there a focus on any particular EU key competence/s or a combination of them, or perhaps there is more of a focus on alternative/complementary competences defined at national level?

The common core of competences covers most of the European key competences, except for 'Learning to learn' and 'Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship', the latter being partly addressed by 'Autonomy and initiative'. The reason the competence 'Learning to learn' has not been adopted in France is due to the fact that many teachers claimed they did not know how to assess such a competence in a relevant way.

All competences included within the socle commun must be developed and assessed in compulsory schooling.

In Spring 2014, a new department in the ministry of education was created to develop digital learning in education: "direction du numérique pour l'éducation" (<http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid29064/ecole-numerique.html>). The development of students' digital competence is seen as an important challenge for the coming years.

According to the proposal of the "Conseil supérieur des programmes" (Spring 2014), knowledge and competences should be clustered under 5 topics :

- Languages for thinking and communicating.
- Methods and tools for learning.
- Personal development and citizenship.
- Observing and understanding the world.
- World representations and human activity.

The aim of the blueprint is to define a way of combining knowledge and competences rather than opposing them. "Competence" is defined as the capacity to mobilise resources to face a complex task or situation.



STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED:

Who are the main stakeholders involved in key competence development in your country?

The development of key competences was promoted by the 2005 Educational Act (*loi d'orientation sur l'école*). Everyone in the field of education is therefore involved in the development of key competences, but this is especially true for teachers of compulsory schooling.

Some resources (e.g. assessment tools and documents) were prepared at a national level, by ministry offices.

In local authorities, in-service training (e.g. on assessment) was organised for teachers and headteachers in primary school as well as in lower secondary schools. Nevertheless, this training did not receive wide enough support in the long term due to lack of funding. Families and school partners (local authorities, social and economic stakeholders, associations, etc.) may have felt that they did not receive sufficient information on the implementation of the key competences.



KCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES:

How does the implementation of key competence development/reform in school education function in your country? (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.)

Since 2005 political commitment has been fairly continuous. The French ministry of education is responsible for implementing the *socle commun* and is accountable for this to the national parliament. The main steps of the national policies were:

- Adapting the subject syllabi for compulsory education.
- Implementing the PCB (personal competences booklet) in a digital form in secondary education, and developing affiliated resources (references grids, assessment exercises).
- Developing national training to strengthen a network of trainers. This could help implementation at local level, particularly in relation to educational inspectors.

The first certification of the *socle commun* took place in June 2011, linked with the end of compulsory education exam, the DNB (*Diplôme National du Brevet*).

An appraisal of the implementation of the common core therefore shows:

- Heterogeneity of implementation and assessment at national level. Some schools show strong involvement and in-depth work on competences. Others carry out very weak work on teaching and evaluation of the key competences, leading to a non-reflexive completion of the PCB.
- Differentiated involvement of teachers and headteachers in the process, with some putting a great deal of effort into new teaching and assessment strategies, while others demonstrate a lack of understanding of the institutional applications. Some teachers also feel that they have not received enough support for the implementation of competence assessment.
- A lack of understanding on the part of families on the new methods of assessment.
- A lack of continuity in assessing key competences between primary and secondary school.

In spite of the lack of continuity in national policy, a range of educational actors (i.e. teachers, principals, inspectors etc.) work in informal networks to implement key competences and the common core. This work is shaped through meetings, training sessions, and the sharing of documents across the country.

OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS:

What would you identify as obstacles and/or facilitators to developing and implementing a key competence approach in your country's education system, or to more generally introducing any type of educational reform related to the definition of key competences and revision of the curriculum, and to joint collaboration on such issues relying on the input from those working on different dimensions (e.g. teacher training, learning resources etc.)?

The main obstacles :

- A technical rather than pedagogical view of the implementation of the socle commun on the part of different stakeholders, particularly teachers, who focus more on the administrative aspects than on the meaning of the competences to be shared with pupils.
- The Personal Competences Booklet, intended to be a tool to follow the work on competences, is considered strictly as a certification tool rather than a formative one throughout compulsory schooling.
- Lack of pedagogical tools and resources that would help all stakeholders to develop methods to use and assess the competences. For example, competences 1, 6 and 7 (communication in the mother tongue, social and civic competences and sense of initiative and entrepreneurship) have few resources published on the ministry website.
- A real issue is the need to help the pedagogical team of every school to implement the socle commun. This is even more the case due to the heterogeneity of initial teacher training, linked to the involvement of different subjects in key competences. The lack of

experienced trainers on competence based learning and lack of funding for in-service training was another reason for this difficulty.

- An important proportion of teachers, mainly in secondary education, consider that a competence-based approach to education submits the school too much to employers' expectations and agendas, and that it will be implemented at the cost of knowledge acquisition.

The main facilitators:

- Reinforcing the adaptation of the syllabus to the socle commun, identifying the progression of the level to be reached by students at different times in their schooling.
- Building of resources for formative and summative purposes in primary school and in all secondary school subjects.
- Making the validation process of the socle commun easier and clearer, particularly for families, in order to better share information about work on competences.
- Strengthening the initial and in-service training on the content, implementation and assessment of competences for all educational stakeholders. This could be done with the help of peer-to-peer training, using school members with good experience in teaching competences.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/USEFUL URLs:

-  Socle Commun:
<http://eduscol.education.fr/pid23199/socle-commun-ecole-college.html>
-  Conférence nationale sur l'évaluation:
<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid80650/lancement-de-la-conference-nationale-sur-l-evaluation-des-eleves.html>
-  Présentation de la loi de refondation de l'École:
<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid66812/projet-loi-pour-refondation-ecole-une-ecole-juste-pour-tous-exigeante-pour-chacun.html>
-  Le Conseil supérieur des programmes:
<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid75495/le-conseil-superieur-des-programmes.html>
-  La proposition de nouveau socle commun par le conseil supérieur des programmes:
http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/Organismes/47/7/CSP_-_Projet_de_socle_commun_de_connaissances,_de_competences_et_de_culture_334477.pdf

ABOUT EUROPEAN SCHOOLNET

European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet project.

European Schoolnet is a network of 31 Ministries of Education from across the European member states, leading educational innovation at European level. As a major international think tank, European Schoolnet operates key European services in education on behalf of the European Commission, member Ministries of Education and industry partners.

European Schoolnet's activities are divided among three areas of work:

- Policy, research and innovation: information sharing and evidence building.
- Schools services: enhancing cooperation between schools across Europe.
- Advocacy: how ICT and digital media contribute to transforming teaching and learning processes.

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