

How can private companies and local authorities be involved in the forward-looking management of jobs and skills at local level?

Peer Review of the Policy Learning Platform

11 & 12 February 2025

Final report

1. Brief presentation of the beneficiary and his/her motivation for hosting a peer review

The Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Region supports local EGTC initiatives through awareness-raising, promotion and engineering support, as well as by coordinating the initiatives.

In Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, funding for EGTC initiatives is part of the State-Region Plan Contract (CPER) and is based on a **proactive policy on the part of the Region**. The State and the Region have also signed an *EGTC Roadmap 2022-2027* to define a common framework for the implementation of this synergy and to respond to the issues identified in the territorial employment and skills diagnoses. The Gestion prévisionnelle des emplois et des compétences territoriale (GPECT), a local development and support tool, was already well developed in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté.

For over 10 years, in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, forward-looking management of jobs and skills has been developed through the actions of players **looking for solutions to employment and skills problems in their areas**, in order to support their development and their economic and social change, and to go beyond the simple intra-company dimension. The aim is to meet local needs in terms of employment, recruitment and training.

2. Specification of the political challenge

In order to provide an early response to the need to match the skills available in an area with the jobs required, these local projects need to be set up in conjunction with local employment players such as businesses, and with the support of local authorities.

The aim is to encourage collaboration and cooperation between companies in a given area, who must work towards a **common interest** in this **area-based approach**, so that they see the area as a breeding ground for skills and also as a fundamental issue in terms of attracting employees.

Cooperation between **companies** and the contribution, at least political, of **local authorities** is the issue at stake in our request. The difficulty of mobilising companies around a common interest at the level of their territory is identified by EGTC project leaders.

The lack of involvement of certain local authorities is also a hindrance to these initiatives, as they do not make their skills available and are therefore not potential intermediary funders.

The political challenge is therefore as follows:

- Actively involve businesses in the design and implementation of regional employment and skills policies
- Optimising multi-level governance of employment and skills policies, involving regional, local and national authorities
- Adapting employment and skills policies to meet needs and making the region more attractive to employees attracted from outside the region

3. Participants

List of peer review participants :

- Members of the beneficiary organisation

LEPLAT	Pierre		Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council	Director, Guidance and Career Paths Department
LIGNIER	Catherine		Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council	Deputy Director, Guidance and Career Paths Department

JUVING	Charlotte		Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council	Head of Department, Guidance Strategy and Regional Coordination, Guidance and Career Paths Department
DOTAL	Christiane		Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council	Project Manager, Guidance Strategy and Territorial Coordination Department, Guidance and Career Paths Directorate
SATIN	Eve		Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council	Head of International Cooperation and Outreach, Europe and International Outreach Department
LIRON	Isabelle	Elected Region	Bourgogne-Franche-Comté Regional Council	Vice-President of the Regional Council in charge of vocational training for jobseekers, economic change and social dialogue

- Local stakeholders involved

SALLÈS	Patrick	DREETS Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Deputy Regional Director
MASSIA	Philippe	DREETS Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Head of the Skills, Certifications and Control Department Head of the Skills Evolution and Economic Change Department
MATHY	Emilie	DREETS Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Economic Change Officer
RIVERO	Daphnée	DREETS Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Déléguée Régionale à l'Accompagnement des Reconversions Professionnelles (Regional Delegate for Career Transition Support)
BAILLY	Fabienne	DDETS 21	Head of the Employment and Territorial Cohesion Division
NIVAUT	Antoine	DDETS 71 (DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTORATE FOR EMPLOYMENT, WORK AND SOLIDARITY)	Head of the business support department
MENAGER	Angeline	CMQ-E ITIP (Campus des métiers et des qualifications d'Excellence "Innovative and high-performance technological industry")	Operational Director
POTHIN	Frédéric	GIE Green Cut	Industry GPECT Manager
PARTY	Ludovic	Vehicle of the Future cluster	Director of PerfoEST
PONCET	Noémie	Community of the Val d'Amour	Economic Development Officer

- Pairs

MARZANO	Gabriele	Amministrazione Regionale del l'Emilia-Romagna	Emilia-Romagna (Italy)
ELMEVIK	Anders	Region Skåne	Sweden (Suède)
MAYER	Christian	Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH	Austria (Austria)
MILLER	Fliss	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)	United Kingdom (Royaume-Uni)
ONDREJECH	Patrick	Trnava Self Governing Region, Slovakia	Slovakia (Slovaquie)
WALBRODT	Nils	Schleswig-Holsteinisches Institut für Berufliche Bildung	Germany (Allemagne)

- Interreg Europe team

GLØERSEN	Erik	Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform	Thematic Expert on More Social Europe
SCHMERBER	Luc	Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform	Thematic Expert on More Social Europe
RAMAGLIONI	Ilaria	Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat	Policy officer

4. Policy recommendations

- How can companies be actively involved in local employment and skills policies?
- How can we help them identify common interests and opportunities for cooperation with other companies?
- How can the cooperation dynamic be maintained over time?

- ◆ Better match between economic development strategies and employment and skills forecasts.
- ◆ Improve the relationship between schools (higher education) and companies: e.g. a forum where both entities are represented. Companies can be represented by professional organisations.
- ◆ The local level is appropriate.
- ◆ Revisiting the "contract of objectives" model?
- ◆ Implement responsive public systems for anticipating jobs and skills.

The training programme should be reviewed to make it more **agile** (modular, shorter and better adapted to the specific needs of the company) ⇒ Consider a **public-private partnership**, for example to make co-investment and training possible.

The governance mechanisms of the EGTC could be adapted and enriched to accommodate such solutions. This presupposes a strengthening of support and dialogue capacities at regional level.

However, the usefulness **of cross-sector exchanges of experience** on human resources management has been demonstrated.

- Upper Austria: a human resources network, a skills centre for inter-company cooperation. The **clusters** are the main stakeholders (it is difficult to mobilise very small businesses and large companies do not need it). The cluster helps companies to develop strategies for retaining and developing their own staff. This is increasingly important, particularly in "small" sectors that rely on "niche skills". The cluster's activities are not organised territorially within the region. They are organised around thematic sub-themes.

LEVERS FOR IMPROVING DIALOGUE WITH COMPANIES

Strengthening **collaboration between training and human resources management** in companies:

- Example with *Mind The Gap* (Sweden): series of workshops. The aim is to provide the right methods and tools for successfully training existing staff or recruiting new employees.¹

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/mind-the-gap-business-transformation-and-skills-needs-identification-tool>

- The Trnava region (Slovakia) actively involves companies in the development of educational programmes, which increases their capacity to provide concrete responses.

Current trends in jobs and skills **depend much** more on technological development, research and innovation **in the sectors concerned** than on specific regional characteristics.

The Region needs to better identify and communicate the **added value of a collective approach to anticipating jobs and skills**.

The peer review discussions on the levers for promoting a sustainable and active dialogue with companies covered a wide range of issues.

Some have focused on the purpose of these policies:

- Ensuring that **public policy** discourse **on the digital and green transitions** matches the **aspirations and concrete needs of businesses** associated with the corresponding changes.
- Providing **short-term** support for businesses, while maintaining a **long-term** strategic public policy perspective on job creation and skills development
- Combining skills and abilities
 - The emphasis is increasingly on **cross-disciplinary skills** and **abilities** rather than job titles,
 - Micro-skills (specific, task-based abilities) are becoming increasingly important. They are often addressed through **modular learning**.

A successful policy must maintain a **dual approach, balancing the two time horizons**. Difficulties in establishing stable partnerships with businesses in local GPECTs may be linked to an excessive focus on long-term planning.

A sector-based approach seems easier to implement than a geographically concentrated approach. However, companies are not necessarily linked to labour market areas:

↻ Large companies, sectoral organisations and chambers of industry/commerce can take a territorial approach,

↻ Most SMEs make no link between any recruitment problems and social and economic developments at 'labour market area' level.

⇒ Disconnection between the company and what's happening in the local area.

The **territorial dimension of the EGTC format can be difficult for many companies to grasp**. This is probably one of the main reasons why it is so difficult to involve them in EGTC partnerships.

The challenge is to combine :

- a **sectoral dialogue**, targeting industries and companies, also looking at the possibility of retraining and redeployment of employees between companies in the same industry.
- A **public policy that takes an interest in the economic and social implications of changes in the profiles sought by companies**, and seeks to prepare for future developments. This can give rise to partnerships, strategies and measures at the level of labour market areas.

To meet this challenge, it may be necessary to review the current GPECT model.

¹ <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/mind-the-gap-business-transformation-and-skills-needs-identification-tool>: The Mind the Gap initiative is a tool designed to help SMEs assess the skills and competencies required for short- and long-term digital and ecological transitions, as well as for strategic skills management. The tool maps specific skills needs and provides valuable information not only for organisations, but also for public sector entities and vocational education and training providers. The format consists of two two-hour workshops, structured to produce a concrete action plan. This good practice has already been replicated in regions such as Belgium, Norway and Scotland, with over 350 analyses carried out. *Mind the Gap* has proved effective in closing regional skills gaps and aligning educational provision with business needs, thereby reducing skills mismatches. This proven tool is ready to be transferred to other regions wishing to identify and support the skills and competencies required for the digital and ecological transitions.

One possible approach would be to formalise the coexistence of parallel and shared initiatives for forward-looking management of employment and skills, targeting respectively - sectors and clusters, on the one hand, - labour market areas, on the other.

These initiatives will have distinct and overlapping geographies:

- The sectors are organised into networks, with possible concentrations of players and links in certain areas. They are characterised by numerous links with players from outside the region.
- Labour market areas generally cover a continuous geographical area.

The objectives and methods of "sector" and "employment area" (or "GPECT") GPEC are different. While companies can be expected to be actively involved on a more continuous basis in "industry" GPEC, their involvement in "labour market area" GPEC (or "GPECT") will be more ad hoc.

BROAD, MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE OF JOB AND SKILLS MANAGEMENT

◆ Preserving the "golden thread" of public policy at different levels:

- Refine the eligibility criteria for project leaders to minimise the risk of ineffective implementation and ensure strong involvement of local stakeholders.
- Form "**core teams**" in which regional authorities and decentralised government bodies play an active role. These regional and national players seem to be more involved than the current EGTC structures.
- Facilitate the identification of "**resource persons**" and **experts** likely to contribute to the monitoring and implementation of the GPECT. These people do not necessarily belong to institutions traditionally linked to the GPECT, but they could **enrich the network and provide** valuable **expertise**.

◆ Roles of research and higher education institutions :

There is sometimes a mismatch between the boundaries of the EGTC and the location of educational establishments relevant to skills development. There is little investment by higher education in EGTCs, and the link with secondary education is difficult. **Correcting this discrepancy** is an opportunity for improvement in Bourgogne-Franche-Comté.

Tracks:

- Start modestly to strengthen relations with higher education with initiatives that bring companies and schools together by entering into partnerships with companies in different sectors and with the public administration.
- Help finance companies' R&D activities.
- Promote business-university links at different hierarchical levels (encourage academics to work with businesses, encourage businesses to contribute to research, etc.).

TARGET AUDIENCES AND APPEAL

► For NEETs :

Shared services, a kind of youth employment agency: the idea of a single location (equivalent to MILO?).

► For skilled workers :

The Region's attractiveness policy is already well developed.

E.g. Sweden: setting up an "international digital house" as part of the "STEM-UP project" aimed at recruiting STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students.

Objectives:

- Carry out a gap analysis of current practices. They want to identify measures to encourage international students to stay in the region after graduation
- Enabling regional companies to effectively recruit foreign skills.
- Attracting, welcoming and connecting international talent through the creation of a "Digital International House for Skåne" website.

CONCLUSION

- The territorial approach of the EGTC is commendable in terms of tackling employment and skills issues from a social and economic development perspective, but **it is not always the best suited to active dialogue with companies** (language and supporting structure not always in tune with companies).

- Combine territorial approaches with strategies targeting industries, sectors and clusters.
 - With regard to the initial and central issue of establishing stable and functional partnerships with businesses on jobs and skills planning, the peers highlighted good practices that are not mainly territorial, for example Clust-ER (Emilia-Romagna) (Discussion groups on jobs and skills forecasting; *Matching*" initiatives such as "job fairs" - **pairing university students with local businesses**), *UpperWORK* (Upper Austria) (university-business connections through partnerships), *Mind the Gap* (Skåne) (workshops with businesses).
 - **Shared territorial approaches** tend to focus on labour market integration, for example:
 - *Community Skills Hubs* (South Yorkshire): close cooperation between local employment agencies, health services and community groups,
 - youth employment agencies (JBA) (Schleswig Holstein) (non-hierarchical organisation),
 - Youth Guarantee Councils (Trnava) (platform for the preparation, approval and implementation of the regional action plan for young people. It is divided into several thematic working groups and is open to all interested organisations. The aim is to create an innovative space for policy development).

5. Possible timetable for implementation

1. Internal meeting to take note of various proposals, suggestions and areas for improvement
2. Selection of proposals that seem interesting to study and feasible: short and long term
3. Discussions with regional government departments
4. Feedback to elected representatives in the form of a memo
5. Technical feedback to project leaders: June 2025 Network Committee
6. 2th half-year 2025: implement the first steps in the development of public policy

6. Conclusions

The contributions of several peers suggest that it may be difficult for companies to make a strong and lasting commitment to EGTC initiatives targeting labour market areas. A sector-based approach seems more appropriate.

Besançon 15 April 2025