

Labour market, vocational training, apprenticeships and qualifications

The rise in daily cross-border movement (commuting) coupled with low residential mobility (in Europe as a whole and France in particular due to various cultural and housing rigidities) has increased the need to boost fluidity in job reallocation between sectors within local employment areas, mainly through vocational training.¹⁰⁶

Public action can therefore take cross-border territories into account when this is relevant in terms of available job vacancies and the appropriate fit of the skills of the workforce.

- A recent study by INTERACT¹⁰⁷ analysed issues of long-term development in the integration of the European labour market in two cross-border territories (the Greater Region and the Italy-Slovenia border). Cross-border cooperation programmes have made it possible to develop initiatives facilitating the mobility of workers in these territories. Such initiatives notably improve workers' ability to take advantage of opportunities on the other side of the border, and develop specific cooperation structures that enhance the cross-border integration of the labour market.

While working in a neighbouring country may be the result of a choice forced by high unemployment in the domestic market and a need for labour on the other side of the border, this decision may also stem from other motives such as workers calculating the opportunity offered by cross-border commuting: wage differentials, attractive social benefits, tax optimisation, lower cost of land and property, etc.

Cross-border mobility also gives employers access to workers who are not available on the domestic labour market. Local populations may find jobs without having to move, which helps to lower unemployment rates in the areas concerned.

- **On the French-Swiss and French-Luxembourg borders**, workers move from other French regions to find a job without having to leave the country.

Movements between home and work play a crucial role in local economies due to the business and income they generate, as well as a more or less efficient cross-border public transport network between the different residential, productive, consumer and leisure areas (presential economy).

OCCUPATIONAL FLOWS AND MOVEMENTS

French cross-border territories are characterised by large-scale flows of outgoing commuters, estimated at over 380,000 workers, i.e. roughly 40% of all European flows of cross-border workers.

Commuters reside mostly along France's northern and eastern borders: 170,000 on the border with Switzerland, 82,000 with Luxembourg, 49,000 with Germany and 39,000 with Belgium.

These figures have sharply increased over the last few decades due to the strong demand for labour generated by the economic booms in Luxembourg and Switzerland, coupled with the gradual deterioration in the labour market in France's border territories (decline of industry, especially textiles, in the Nord-Pas de Calais Region, steel in Lorraine, etc.), and the mobility facilitated by the free movement of people within the European Union.

The development of transport infrastructure, adequacy of information and advisory services, and also tax agreements and legal convergence between countries, knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country, etc. are all factors that influence the fluidity of the labour market (professional mobility) and the creation of a genuine cross-border employment area.

¹⁰⁶ P Veltz, *La grande transition*, Seuil, 2008.

¹⁰⁷ INTERACT, *Study on Labour Market Integration Across Borders*, February 2015, http://www.interact-eu.net/news/study_on_labour_market_integration_across_borders/7/18230