

for labour is high and expected to grow further in the coming decades. While the population that is of an age to undergo training or study is expected to remain stable in Alsace, forecasts predict a decline of nearly 20% in the 16-25 age group in Baden-Württemberg by 2025.<sup>138</sup>

In the face of this anticipated labour shortage on the other side of the Rhine, the use of French workers is likely to become a significant aspect in bilateral relations.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES?

In spite of these divergent demographic dynamics, **Germany has become less attractive as a destination for the working population in the French border region** (down 20% since 1999,<sup>139</sup> then a stagnation of flows) and has been overtaken by North-West Switzerland. This can be ascribed to higher wages in Switzerland, but also the destruction of low-skilled jobs and the gradual tertiarisation of the German labour market, which directly affect the population in Alsace, the majority of whom are qualified to the vocational CAP-BEP<sup>140</sup> level. In addition, the decline in the command of German has encouraged German employers to favour the hiring of skilled workers from Southern Europe, in spite of the geographical proximity of French workers.

## WHAT RESPONSES HAVE BEEN PROVIDED?

France's public employment agency, **Pôle Emploi**, and Germany's Federal Employment Agency (**Bundesagentur für Arbeit**) have been working together for several years to improve the cross-border placement of job-seekers. This has involved the exchanging of job vacancies and profiles, dissemination by press and radio, the organisation of recruitment-meetings, joint participation in trade fairs, workshops at Pôle Emploi and in vocational lycées, and mailing campaigns to employers, etc. The French and German employment services are also supported in their actions by other bodies that provide information and advice to cross-border workers: the Upper Rhine EURES-T (an information and advice network for workers and employers that brings together public employment services, trade unions, employers organisations and regional authorities), the INFOBEST network (information points for cross-border matters), etc. These schemes contribute to transparency in the cross-border job market and professional mobility on either side of the Rhine but are designed more to raise awareness about professional opportunities in the cross-border area than to provide personalised monitoring and support to help job-seekers find work.

The signature on 26 February 2013 of the framework agreement for cooperation regarding French-German job-seeker placement, covering a three-year period, was intended precisely to develop this latter competence, while at the same time making permanent and increasing partnerships between employment agencies along the whole of the border.

Concluded between Pôle Emploi Alsace and the regional directorate of the Baden-Württemberg Federal Employment Agency on the one hand, and between Pôle Emploi Lorraine and the regional directorate of the Saarland-Rhineland-Palatinate Federal Employment Agency on the other, in operational terms **the framework agreement consists of four local cooperation agreements signed between:**

- the Strasbourg and Offenburg agencies (opening of the first cross-border placement service in Kehl on 26 February 2013)
- the Haguenau and Wissembourg agencies and those of Landau and Karlsruhe-Rastatt (20 September 2013)
- the Haut-Rhin Department agencies and those of Freiburg and Lörrach (26 October 2013)
- the Saarbrücken and Sarreguemines agencies (15 November 2013).

**The framework agreement undertakes to ensure:**<sup>141</sup>

- contractual procedures for the effective exchange of information about job vacancies and persons seeking work, in compliance with the rules in force in each country
- greater knowledge of the cross-border economy and labour market within public employment agencies, notably on the part of staff in charge of intermediation
- information and advice to employers on cross-border recruitment
- a range of services for job-seekers
- coordinated measures for an active employment policy, notably in the fields of qualifications and "immersion" work experience.

The job-seeker placement services have a strong cross-border and intercultural approach. Their guidelines are drawn up and results evaluated by the local steering committee (the agreement's signatories) to ensure that better account is taken of territorial realities. The advisers are bilingual and the presence in both countries' employment services of advisers from the other country is already an established practice along the French-German border.

An annual work meeting, organised on an alternating basis and for each territory (Alsace/Baden Württemberg and Lorraine/Saarland-Rhineland-Palatinate) has the purpose of evaluating the achievement of the objectives set and of drawing up new guidelines. It brings together the directors or their representatives as well as other participants appointed

<sup>138</sup> Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg.

<sup>139</sup> Source: Data collection and estimates – INSEE.

<sup>140</sup> Vocational Aptitude Certificate ("certificat d'aptitude professionnelle", CAP) and Vocational Studies Certificate ("brevet d'études professionnelles", BEP)

<sup>141</sup> Source: Framework agreement for cooperation regarding French-German job-seeker placement.