

GRETA

France

Language Policy



Good Practice Executive Summary

GRETA is a network of VET providers covering over 6,000 locations across France and which offer courses in a variety of subjects, including languages. Overall, training at the GRETA is funded mostly by the State (for half of the trainees) but also by businesses (in one third of the cases). GRETA reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism in the sense that training can be provided on demand, in an almost unlimited number of languages, at all levels and to suit a variety of restraints: in groups, on a one-to-one basis, over the telephone, using a multimedia platform, in a language centre, while having lunch with the trainer, on the internet, etc..

Training in an unlimited number of languages can potentially be covered, from the most to the least demanded. The focus of the training may be one or several target level(s) or one or several target competency (ies). Training is carried out by state-accredited teachers or by experienced trainers. Language certificates are systematically offered at the end of the course whenever available.

The tax scheme under which GRETA operates allows to offer courses starting at very low fees. These vary depending on job status and income levels.

In France, everybody in employment is eligible to language training through the Droit Individuel à la formation (which can be translated Individual Right to Training), or D.I.F., which is a training bonds system. The DIF provides yearly with 20 hours of free training for everybody in employment and can be used to take language courses. This makes language training fully accessible across the country.

Training targets people in employment but also outside employment, such as job seekers, including people in retraining, and migrants. Employed may take a language course as part of the DIF but also as part of a corporate training scheme. The course may then deal with language for general or for specific purposes, for instance for a particular business sector or a particular type of needs, as determined through a needs analysis prior to the training. All combinations of languages, sectors and purposes can be considered.

List of available group language courses at the GRETA in Bordeaux (<http://www.langues.gretabordeaux.com/formations-qualifiantes.php>, visited 7/4/10)

- » ANGLAIS / ESPAGNOL / ITALIEN Débutant (Découverte A1)
- » ANGLAIS / ESPAGNOL / ITALIEN Pré-intermédiaire (Survie A2)
- » ANGLAIS / ESPAGNOL / ITALIEN Intermédiaire (Echanges B1)
- » FRANCAIS LANGUE ETRANGERE
- » DEUX JOURS SUR MESURE POUR OPTIMISER VOS INTERVENTIONS PROFESSIONNELLES AUPRES DE VOS INTERLOCUTEURS ANGLOPHONES
- » ANGLAIS CONVERSATIONNEL
- » DEJEUNER CONVERSATIONNEL EN ANGLAIS
- » INITIATION à LA DEGUSTATION
- » FORMATION ŒNOLOGIQUE en ANGLAIS
- » ANGLAIS/ESPAGNOL - NIVEAU DEBUTANT -
- » ANGLAIS-ESPAGNOL-ITALIEN-ALLEMAND...REMISE A NIVEAU
- » FORMATION à DISTANCE - ANGLAIS - ESPAGNOL
- » ANGLAIS PAR TELEPHONE
- » DOCUMENT TECHNIQUE: Lecture et Compréhension
- » ESPAGNOL - Débutant (Découverte A1)
- » Anglais professionnel appliqué à l'hôtellerie débutants et faux débutants
- » Anglais professionnel appliqué à l'hôtellerie Niveau intermédiaire
- » Anglais professionnel appliqué à l'hôtellerie Niveau Avancé

GRETA is a network of training providers which rely on the training resources of the national secondary education sector. GRETA was created in 1989 with the aim of offering state-funded VET across the country, including language training. There are 225 GRETA all over France, with more than 6,500 training locations, all fields included. In 2007, GRETA had trained a total of 456,500 people in a variety of fields, among which languages.

Trainers are often secondary education teachers who choose to give language classes as extra hours. Teachers are not assigned to work with groups of adults instead of high school children, but make the decision to work part-time as trainers. GRETA also employs freelance trainers if there are no secondary school teachers available, but also has the flexibility of employing freelancers provided they meet the necessary conditions, which are that they must be employed full-time in another organisation or must be self-employed working at least 1600 hours annually outside the GRETA. These are quite demanding conditions for trainers to be employable. Not all trainers looking for employment are actually employable by the GRETA but these strict conditions allow to keep training fees very low, as the employer then is not required to pay employment taxes. Some companies require trainers to be native speakers. GRETA is actually able to meet this demand, as terms of training programmes are all very much negotiable.

GRETA actually competes with private providers of language training but also deploys training in the lesser accessible rural zones, covering the whole of the country, so as to make VET within everyone's reach, whatever the employment status, initial level of training, financial means and location. In practice, some training is carried out for migrants who need French but they do not represent the bulk of the trainees. These low language training fees actually allow firms to devote financial resources to other areas, thus making them more competitive.

Being part of the national educational system, GRETA is non-profit, which also contributes towards keeping fees at an unbeatable level. Language training typically lasts 40-60 hours; costs vary depending on trainees' status. For instance, an hour of training as part of a group can cost as little as €7 an hour for job seekers or €8 for workers on the minimum wage and with a low level of qualification, while trainees who work in private companies are charged up to €120 an hour (in 2010). Fees for one-to-one training are capped at €96 an hour. Trainers receive €40 net an hour (2010 figure) maximum, which is the compensation rate set by the French education ministry. Training is charged less to administrations than to businesses.

GRETA offers training in a variety of languages, besides other non-language subjects. Although information is available on training sessions for English, Spanish, German, Italian and Russian, more language options are possible depending on the location of the trainee and the local availability of trainers.

For instance, a company looking for training in Hebrew can contact the GRETA, which would then try to meet the demand locally by getting in touch with a Hebrew teacher working in a secondary school so that a training session in Hebrew can be arranged and of course provided the language teacher agrees to deliver the training. There is no limit to the number of languages on offer then. It all depends on local demand and on the supply of trainers in local secondary schools. However, most training demand concerns English, for which the supply of potential trainers, particularly native speakers, is plentiful.

Quality is addressed at the GRETA. In Bordeaux, language training at the GRETA is ISO 9001 certified. Most language trainers who also teach in secondary schools are selected on a competitive basis after one year of preparation of the national competitive examination followed by one year of practical training. Most trainers also have a civil servant status; a minority of others have employment contracts and are not permanent staff in the French educational system. Prior to the training, and when available in the target language, a test is provided so as to determine trainees' levels. The length of the training then depends on the objectives of trainees in terms of level. An extensive discussion with the GRETA counsellor takes place in order to adjust training to availability, wishes, objectives, pace of learning, learning styles and level. The role of the counsellor is crucial, as both individual learners and human resources managers commonly express needs in terms of “revising the basics” and “brushing-up their grammar”, thus showing a limited awareness of the didactic assumptions to language learning. The counsellor also typically gets in contact in the middle of the training, checking that it meets the demand.

Training is fully flexible to take into account every single possible restraint. A number of options are available to businesses or individual trainees. Training may be carried out:

- on corporate premises;
- on GRETA premises;
- both on corporate and GRETA premises;
- using multimedia at GRETA language centres;
- from home or on corporate premises, on any computer, using an internet-based Learning Management System, the name of which is FITEC. Trainees are provided with a FITEC license for the length of their training. FITEC was developed and is run by a private company;
- over the telephone, for the most competent learners;
- at lunch-time, while having lunch;
- within or outside working hours. Some employers accept their employees to receive training within their working hours, others do not.

Blended learning, which includes a variety of learning material, particularly online, is more and more successful and demanded by trainees. GRETA training counsellors may have access to trainees' online files and individually follow up their progress. Trainers are ultimately responsible for the choice of training material and usually resort both to off-the-shelf and tailor-made training methods. The initial levels test was developed by the education

ministry, on which GRETA depends. Language labs commonly contain most commercially-developed learning methods, such as Tell Me More and Reflex' English. When training members of the armed forces, trainers use especially developed training material.

Immersion programmes, in which trainees are hosted in families of the target language for the whole time of the training, are also organised. These are particularly relevant to learners whose L2 or L3 is French. There are also English training programmes which include accommodation at English natives', particularly in the South-West of France.

In addition to levels, training objectives may include sector-specific needs, such as the language required to carry out guided tours of châteaux in the wine industry, or the language of the police. This is determined through the needs analysis at the beginning of the training. Areas that can be covered are limitless.

GRETA targets an unlimited number of organisations and training circumstances. In France, an individual right to training (Droit Individuel à la Formation, or DIF), which is a training bonds system, was established. Concretely, this means that anyone in employment is allowed 20 hours of training free of charge, either within or outside their working hours, depending on the employer. Individuals may then turn to the GRETA to use their bonds for language training if they choose so. A minority of employed actually do. Bonds that have not been used in a given year can be used in the following years, so that several years of training bonds can be used at once, for example, for 60 hours of training in a year, which represents three years of training bonds. Courses in the framework of the DIF can be taken either within or outside working hours, depending on the employer. They may then come on an individual basis. GRETA learners commonly include people in retraining, particularly in the manufacturing industry, when production sites are delocalised. Some learners also take language classes to prepare for a promotion, or to be able to take part in European networks, or to prepare for an international conference.

Training may also be financed by the regional authority in the framework of the regional training scheme (or plan régional de formation). This concerns job seekers in retraining targeting priority sectors, for instance the hotel and catering industry.

In practice, the choice of training providers often takes place following a call to tender issued by stakeholders. Clients of GRETA included the French army, Auchan group, AFDAS (Association Française des Artistes du Spectacle), the police force, SNENMA, etc.. Calls often take place for a given year, so clients of GRETA evolve. Either one particular GRETA branch or GRETA as a nation-wide institution responds to calls.

At the end of the training, language certificates are systematically offered whenever available. They include Toeic, Bulats and Diplôme de Compétences

en Langues, or DCL, a French certificate of professional language which is run by the Education ministry and which exists for German, English and Spanish. The DCL is task-based and tests 4 out of 5 competencies of the CEFRL.

All groups of secondary schools and high schools may express their interest to the network in delivering training and become members of GRETA, which then pools the training material and human resources of these schools and sets up an administrative organisation which enables them to create and manage training. Each regrouping is governed by a board in which all schools are represented, and headed by the head teacher of one of these schools.