

# WORLD SCIENCE FORUM

Budapest 2024

*The science and policy interface at  
the time of global transformations*



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# France's Science Diplomacy Strategy

# Introduction



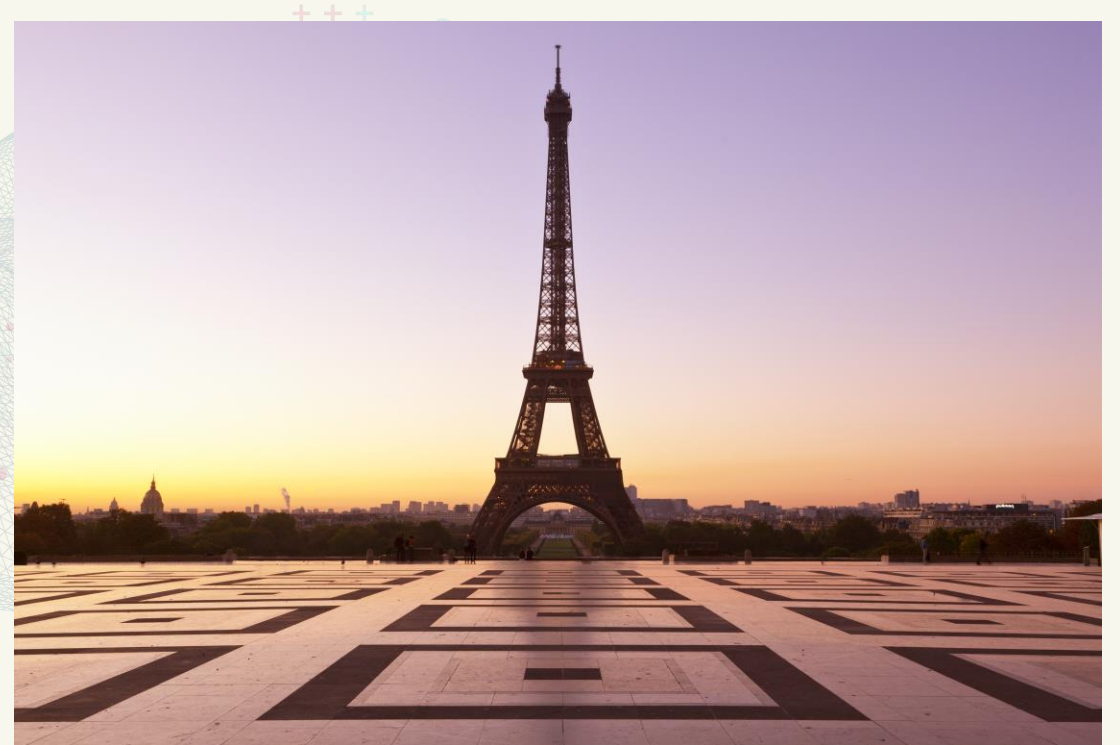
Hi! I'm Olivia.

- Expert in **research and evaluation to maximise the impact of public policies and programmes**
- Carried out research assignments for organisations such as UNDP, the UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact, the European Commission, the British Council, and non-profits.

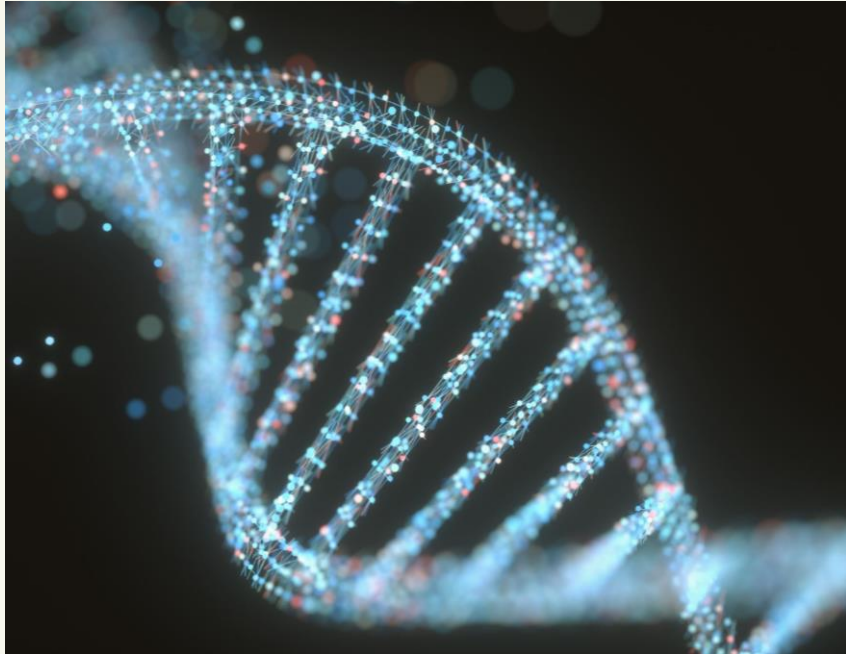


# The French strategy

- Outlined in the report 'Une diplomatie scientifique pour la France' published in January 2013 by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MEAE)
- Framework is considered outdated and there is consensus on the need for revisions.
- France maintains robust and active science diplomacy nevertheless
- Work to revise the strategy could start as soon as from 2025



# Priority Areas



- **Environmental Sciences**
  - Focus on climate resilience and biodiversity
  - Supported by Paris Agreement and partnerships with CIRAD and IRD
- **Medical and Health Sciences**
  - Addressing health disparities
  - Innovating to respond to health crises like COVID-19
  - Collaborative international research
- **Computer and Information Sciences**
  - Aiming to lead in AI and advanced technology solutions
- **Social Sciences**
  - Prominent role in French science diplomacy
  - Joint Units of French Research Institutes Abroad

# Core objectives

## ✓ Science for Diplomacy

### Increase economic competitiveness

- Enhancing climate action & digital tech
- Attracting leading science students, researchers, and innovators
- Welcome to France, Initiatives of Excellence (IDEX), French Tech Ticket

### Soft diplomacy

- Supporting international development, particularly in former colonies
- Sustaining connections with foreign students via France Alumni digital platform

### Tackling Global Societal Challenges

Engaging on issues like climate change, public health, and sustainable development

## ✓ Diplomacy for Science

### Facilitating Research Cooperation

- **Hubert Curien programmes:** bilateral partnerships between France and other countries through funding
- **COMIX:** Establishing bilateral cooperation roadmaps.
- **French university campuses abroad:** Promoting educational exchange.
- **Creating opportunities for international collaboration:** UNESCO, EU HORIZON

## Science in Diplomacy

### Social sciences as priority area

Many diplomats trained in sociology and political science and make use of social sciences within French foreign policy.

### Developing National Research & Development Capacity

- Harmonise and formalise dialogue between scientists and policymakers
- Internationalise its research institutions, expanding their global reach and collaboration.



Significant human and financial resources allocated to the **French science diplomacy network**



Recognised but less prominent aspect. Specific scientific culture; limited scientific expertise of diplomats hinders integration of scientific knowledge into decision-making

# Geographical priorities

## Active in European Science Diplomacy

- Positioning Europe as a leader in global scientific initiatives
- Participation in EU programmes like Horizon 2020
- Partnerships with the European Space Agency

## Strategic Partnerships Beyond Europe

- Collaboration with the USA, Japan, and the UK

## Connections with the Global South (incl. Southeast Asia)

- Addressing Regional Challenges
- Moving from the narrative that France is 'bringing science' to France identifying and working with excellence in the Global South

# Actions and Tools



\*4 Science and Technology Advisors in the US, UK, Japan, and Germany  
18 Science and Technology Attachés  
59 Scientific and University Cooperation Attachés  
20 University Cooperation Attachés



# Strengths and weaknesses compared to European and Asian countries with similar ambitions

## Strengths

- Substantial human and financial resources: strong diplomatic and international research network
- Comprehensive tools and coordination mechanisms
- Active initiator and participant in S&T bilateral and multilateral engagements
- Leverages broader soft power of France and Francophonie

## Weaknesses

- Extensive diplomatic network poses coordination and strategic coherence challenges
- Highly specialised approach to S&T, limited multidisciplinary and English course offer make France less attractive
- Disconnect between scientists and diplomats incl between MEAE and MESR
- **Weak branding:** Fragmented scientific landscape and lack of a cohesive national science image, in the shadow of the cultural diplomacy
- Need for Framework Revisions



# Recommendations



## Revise the Strategy Document

- Reflect achievements, highlight areas for improvement
- Set updated goals and address key challenges

## 2. Establish a Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

- Annual synthesis of quantitative & qualitative data from embassies
- Track metrics like research exchanges, collaborative projects, policy influences

## 3. Leverage International Networks

- Engage the special envoy for Science in INGSA for global knowledge exchange

## 4. Strengthen Scientific Expertise in Diplomacy

- Increase science training for diplomats or recruit personnel with scientific expertise
- Facilitate regular dialogue between diplomats and scientists

## 5. Institutionalise an Annual Strategy Review

- Organise yearly gatherings to realign orientations and set yearly guidelines

## 6. Create a distinct identity for Science Diplomacy

- Create an independent science diplomacy identity, as done by the UK, Germany, and Switzerland

## 7. Mobilise France's Scientific Diaspora

- Systematically engage French scientists abroad for stronger international influence

# Thank you for your attention!



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