

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

# France

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## 1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

France, as the world's 7th largest country in nominal GDP (2.45 trillion euros in 2019), has a larger economic base to fall back on than most ECP competitors. Geopolitically, France slightly outperforms its economic ranking. Its defence spending totals 2.3% of its gross domestic product, a relatively large share compared to other European countries. This translates to a “hard power” ranking of 5th worldwide. In sharp power and diplomacy, France outperforms its economic size even further. The Portland/USC Soft Power 30 Index (2019) ranks France as the top soft power worldwide, while the Global Diplomacy Index places it 3rd (see table 1). This suggests that France is highly effective at translating economic resources into effective projection of influence worldwide, both through coercive and persuasive means.

**Table 1: Geopolitical position of France**

	2019	2015
Hard power rank	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
Sharp power rank	6 <sup>th</sup> / 1,668,726	6 <sup>th</sup> / 1,564,923
Soft power rank	1 <sup>st</sup> / 80.28	4 <sup>th</sup> / 73.64
Diplomacy rank	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> (2016)

France's strong soft power score is reflected in the wide geographic range of its activities. It is active in at least 140 countries worldwide with over 2,000 institutions, 9,000 FTE staff, and over 46,000 local and freelance staff (section 2). According to French government documents, Francophone Africa, Europe, and North America are the three most important regions for French ECP.

**Table 2: Economy of France**

	2019	2015/ % change since 2015
Population (millions) / ranking	67.09 / 21 <sup>st</sup>	66.45 / 1%
GDP ranking	7 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
GDP per capita	€35,960	+9
Cultural economy (%GDP)	0.60 (2018)	-0.10
Education economy (%GDP)	5.10 (2018)	-0.30
R&D economy (%GDP)	2.19 (2018)	-0.08
Media economy (%GDP)	0.20 (2018)	0

As a share of GDP, France spends a relatively large amount on culture, education and media. Its cultural economy was 0.6% of GDP in 2018, while its education, R&D and media sectors represent 5.1%, 2.2%, and 0.2% of the total economy, respectively (see table 2). For a wealthy

country like France, this represents a substantial sum of money. However, these sectors have not grown over the past five years—in fact in many cases they have declined. Occurring alongside per capita GDP stagnation, this means that the scale of France’s ECP-related economic sectors has not increased in raw euro amounts either. This likely means that to increase its global footprint, France must manage existing resources in a more effective and targeted way—continuing to utilize local partnerships, local recruits, and external funds.

**Table 3: Government spending on ECP fields as a percentage of total outlays**

	2019	% change since 2015
Culture	1.10 (2018)	-1.10
Education	9.10 (2018)	-0.50
Research & Development	0,99	-0.15
Media	0,30 (2018)	0

Within the areas of spending, levels of government funding vary dramatically. Over 9% of education is government-financed, around 1% of each education and R&D, and 0.3% of media. As with the sectors overall size, government support has either been flat or is declining (see table 3).

Although France tends to shy away from employing the American language of “soft power,” (preferring instead “diplomatie culturelle et d’influence”), it does not hesitate to view ECP in clear geopolitical terms. Indeed, France describes cultural diplomacy as one of the “three pillars” of its foreign policy and sees its efforts as a direct counter to American “cultural imperialism” (Brown, 2017 pp. 44).

The French language plays a special role in this. Indeed, in 2018, President Macron unveiled an ambitious plan called the “International Strategy for the French Language and Multilingualism,” which seeks to establish French as one of the top three global languages worldwide. It is explicitly linked to geopolitics—the text mentions the rising multipolarity of power and the need for linguistic multipolarity to mirror this. In addition to the expansion of the French language, France’s ECP strategy focuses on expanding French education abroad and increasing the number of foreign tourists and students in France. France was the world’s number one tourist destination in 2018, with 89.3 million foreign tourists. Its goal is to increase this to 100 million by 2022 (France Diplomatie, 2018).

Because of its colonial past, France has close ties to many of the countries of North and West Africa and the Middle East. As a legacy of this history, the French foreign media and schools are disproportionately represented in the francophone countries of Africa (Fiedler & Frère, 2016, p. 69). The colonial history also manifests itself in debates about claims for restitution of African art in Western museums. In 2017, President Macron announced that, “*within five years, the conditions will exist for temporary or definitive returns of African heritage to Africa*” (Élysée, 2018). In 2018, a report commissioned by the Élysée outlined key steps that must be taken for the restitution of important cultural items (Ibid.) There has been some progress in

this regard. For example, France has committed to return 26 looted artefacts to Benin by the end of 2021 (Rea, 2019).

Despite the prominence of French culture in Africa, almost half of all French cultural centres are located in Europe. After the end of the Soviet Union, French policy focused particularly on Eastern Europe. Since the mid-2000s, France has also been expanding its *diplomatie culturelle et d'influence* in Asia's economic centres, such as China, Japan and India, which are regarded as emerging markets for French cultural products.

France also welcomes cultural dialogue with other countries within its borders. Paris has the highest density of international cultural institutes in the world (Perrin, 2015). Additionally, facilities such as the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris and the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée in Marseille are used for exchanges with people in the Arab world and the Mediterranean (Schneider, 2015, p. 362). World-famous institutions like the Museum Louvre, Bibliothèque nationale de France also play an important role in projecting French history and culture worldwide.

Although they may not like to conceive of it as such, French “soft power” is considered to be trending upward. The communications firm Portland argues that “*under Emmanuel Macron, the future of French soft power is bright*” (Portland, 2018). Macron has tried his best to make this prediction accurate. In a 2018 speech he remarked that “*Culture makes it possible to have an influence beyond its economic and geopolitical rank. We must invent a new grammar of international influence and culture is one of them*” (Dagen & Pietralunga, 2018).

## 2. External cultural policy: an overview

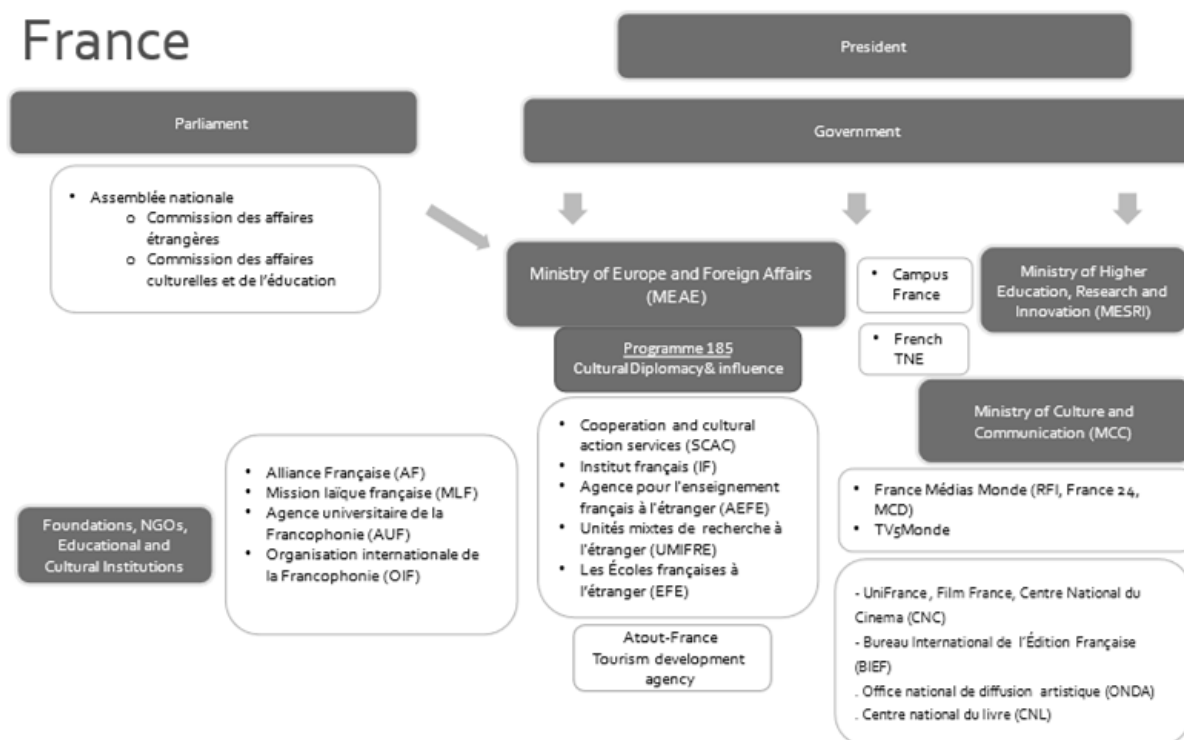
**Table 4: Key ECP statistics for France**

	2019
Number of countries with ECP activities	at least 140
Total number of institutions abroad	~2,030
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	~9,040
ECP freelance & local contract staff	~46,100
Financial scale of all ECP activities (€ million)	956
Government financial support (€ million)	700 (State External Action: Programme 185) 256 (Programme 844 – France Médias Monde)
Comparative ECP ranking	major

In France, the state is regarded as the protective body of culture, language and art (Schneider, 2015, p. 359). Responsibility for “*diplomatie culturelle et d'influence*” lies within the French Foreign Ministry, the Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (MEAE) (formerly Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international or MAEDI). The Ministry

not only looks after the more than 200 embassies and consulates-general, but also, alone or in cooperation with other authorities, the responsible intermediary organisations. The Ministry of Culture, the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (MCC), supports the work of the Institut français, for example in organising the bi-national cultural years, and is represented in its supervisory body. The Ministry of Education, the Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, shares responsibility for Campus France with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is also represented on the supervisory boards of the Institut français and the Agency for French Schools Abroad (AEFE). Figure 1 summarizes the relevant bodies in French ECP.

**Figure 1: Institutional map of France's ECP**



### 3. Fields of ECP

As discussed in section 1, French ECP strategy is heavily based on the promotion of the French language. It uses this particularly to exercise influence in Francophone Africa. France is increasingly expanding its ECP to rising geopolitical powers such as India and China and explicitly sees its role as countering American cultural domination. The key ECP fields are discussed below as they relate to these objectives.

With respect to French activities in the fields of culture and language, two institutions dominate: Institut français with the Alliance Française. Therefore, their relevant activities are both presented in the respective sections on culture and language. Although they have similar aims, in practice there is little cooperation between the two on the ground. Why were the institutions not merged as part of the French ECP innovations in 2010, even though their goals and tasks overlap as far as possible? Experts argued that this would have been tantamount to cultural imperialism, as the locally anchored institutions of the Alliance Française look back on a long tradition of political independence (Forster, 2010).

However, while a complete fusion will not occur, a closer cooperation between the IF and Partnership between the French Institute and the Alliance Française Foundation (which serves as a management hub for the AF branches) was announced by French President Macron in 2017. As of 2019, the support for French language, cultural dissemination, and the professionalization of the Alliance Française agents are all entrusted to IF. In 2019, Foundation AF, IF, and the MEAE signed a tripartite agreement to strengthen mutual cooperation. Table 5 presents combined statistics for both AF and IF in the field of culture and the arts.

### 3.1. Culture and the arts

**Table 5: Statistics on culture and the arts in France**

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	up to 135	-
Number of institutes	Institut français: 226 Alliance française: 832 (2018)	Institut français: 229 (2013) Alliance française: 813
Number of FTE staff	Institut français: 143 Alliance française: 267 + 14,600 local recruits	Institut français: 143 -
Budget (€ million)	Institut français: 39.3	Institut Français: 41.4
Government financial support (€ million)	67.01 Institut français: 33 Alliance française: 7.27 (2020)	68.83 Institut français: 30.5

At the heart of the 2010 reforms was the creation of the Institut français to promote French language and culture abroad. The Institut took over and expanded the tasks of the association Culturesfrance, which had only emerged in 2007 from the merger of the Association française d'action artistique (AFAA) and the Association pour la diffusion de la pensée française, or ADPF (Institut français, 2017a). In addition to the agency in Paris, the Institut français consists of a network of 98 national institutes with 128 branches, some of them historic, which now operate under the same name and logo to improve the visibility of foreign cultural policy.

The regional focus of IF is on the European Union (around 40 per cent of the institutes) and North Africa and the Middle East (around 25 per cent of the institutes) (Institut français, 2018). Through their activities, they support the French publishing industry as well as the fields of music, film, theatre and dance. The Institut français is also intended to promote international cultural activities in France, for example through series of events and festivals (Institut français, 2019). After seven consecutive years of decline, the Institut français budget increased by nearly 6% in 2019 as a one-off to include Saison Africa2020. In 2019, the budget amounted to around 39 million euros; about a quarter was directly invested in promoting the network. This year, it will receive a reduced funds of 28.8 million euros, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Institut Français, 2020).

The Institut français also indirectly supported the national and regional institutes of the same name with over 70 per cent of its expenditure on cultural activities, around 18 million euros (Ibid.). The regional institutes also receive financial support from public and private partners, such as cities, foundations and universities, and through language courses (Perrin, 2015). The declared goal is to significantly reduce the share of state financing for the Institut français, which was 74 per cent in 2015, in the long term and to strengthen financing through partners and its own revenues (Institut français, 2016, p. 75).

The chapters of the Alliance Française offer more than 20,000 cultural events worldwide every year, with nearly 15,000 employees worldwide (Alliance Française, 2018). In countries with no IF or AF, the MoC takes over. In most cases, a cultural attaché serves as director of the IF (Schneider, 2015, p. 363). Cooperation with Germany is extensive, including through a cooperation between the Goethe-Institut and the Institut français. Together, they plan to create joint Franco-German cultural institutes as an application of one of the 15 priorities of the Franco-German Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle of January 22, 2019. Nine cities are included: Rio de Janeiro, Palermo, Erbil and Bishkek, Cordoba (Argentina), Atlanta, Glasgow, Minsk and Ramallah.

### 3.2 Language

**Table 6: Key language promotion statistics on France**

	2019	2015
Number of students enrolled	- Online: 30,504 (AF) - In-class: 1,150,257 (AF & IF) - Bilingual courses: 130,000 (LabelFrancEducation)	- Online: n/a - In class: 1,083,432 (AF & IF) - Bilingual courses: 28,617 (LabelFrancEducation)
Number of candidates for French language qualifications	603,358	556,776
Government financial support (€ million)	67.01 (see above)	68.83 (see above)

The Institut français' most recent annual report described "*the French language at the heart of our action*" (Institut français 2019, p. 7). The institutes have the task of organising cultural events, offering French lessons throughout the country, taking language examinations and strengthening intercultural dialogue.

In France and 131 other countries, 832 Alliance Française institutes (a slight decline from previous years) also offer French lessons, award the DELF and DALF French language certificates and organise cultural events. In 2018, nearly half a million people worldwide took part in Alliance Française language courses (Alliance Française, 2019). Over the past decade, the number of course participants has risen by almost 60 per cent. The Alliance Française can truthfully claim to be "*the world's largest language school*" (Steinkamp, 2009, p. 7). While the tasks and objectives of the Alliance Française and the Institut français clearly overlap, their business models differ. The individual branches of the Alliance Française are independent associations founded in accordance with national law, which largely finance themselves independently

through language course income and donations and thus bear roughly 95 per cent of their own costs (Alliance Française, 2018). The Alliance Française Foundation, founded in 2007, coordinates the network and, after a thorough examination process, grants the right to use the name Alliance Française, but has no direct influence on the individual institutes (Alliance Française, 2017). Financial independence from the French state gives the institutes greater freedom in planning their programmes and cultural activities. This independence is firmly anchored in the Alliance's history.

In an illustration of the regional priorities for French ECP, Alliance Française's location count by continent is: North America (112), Latin America (181), Caribbean (19), Europe (244), Africa and Indian Ocean (110), Oceania (39), Asia (76). In the future, the government has indicated that it wants to further increase its footprint in the developing world.

Despite its official independence, the Alliance Française institutes work closely with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institut français. They are an integral part of France's foreign cultural and educational policy. This cooperation is based on annual agreements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which supports more than 300 of the associations by financing training programmes and staff secondment, as well as an agreement concluded in 2010 with the Institut français (Lane, 2013; p. 111). The two cultural and language institutes work closely together on projects and the institutes of the Alliance Française complement the cultural offerings of the Institut français, particularly in North and South America, where the state institute has only nine offices (Schneider, 2015, p. 362).

Other important language institutions include LabelFrancÉducation, which offers bilingual courses. Recently, there was also a significant increase in the number of schools that were labelled FrancÉducation. LabelFrancÉducation has 130,000 students enrolled in primary and secondary education. Another programme, FLAM (French as a First Language), is also an extension of French language policy. FLAM has 170 subsidized associations in 42 countries.

### 3.2. Primary and secondary education

**Table 7: Key statistics on foreign primary and secondary education of France**

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	139	136
Number of schools	522	494
Number of students	370,000	336,000
Number of staff/teachers	6,052 and 30,000 local recruits	6,600 and 14,260 local recruits
Budget (€ million)	1,100 (2019-20)	1,278.3
Government financial support (€ million)	404.5 (2019-20)	401.9



The Agency for French Schools Abroad (AEFE) was founded in 1990 as a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is responsible for the pedagogical, personnel and financial support of more than 500 French educational institutions abroad. The network includes primary, middle and secondary schools (écoles, collèges and lycées français) in 139 countries. The schools have different management models: 74 schools are under the direct management of the AEFE, 156 schools run the AEFE and party organisations jointly and 264 schools run the partner organisations independently. One such partner organisation is the Mission laïque française (MLF) association. To ensure that all schools meet the rigid quality standards of the French education system, they are accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Education and evaluated annually. The extensive school network is financed by both state funds and school fees.

In 2019, the budget amounted to almost 1.1 billion euros, a decrease from 1.3 billion in 2015 but roughly constant since 2018 (AEFE, 2016; 2019; 2020). 386 million in government subsidies were provided in 2019. This decrease was quickly reversed, as the 2019 “Development Plan for French Education Abroad” presented in 2019, emphasized education as a core component of ECP. The proposed 2020 subsidy for the AEFE represents nearly 57% of the programme, or 408.6 million euros (a 6% increase year-over-year) (Picchia & Vallini 2019).

AEFE's mission is twofold: on the one hand, schools should guarantee equal education for French children and young people living abroad with their families. On the other hand, the influence of the French language and culture is promoted by educating foreign pupils. In line with this mission, 370,000 children and young people attended French schools abroad during the 2018/19 school year (AEFE, 2020). Parents value the schools primarily for the quality of the teaching they offer. The multilingual and multicultural environment of the schools also has an impact on their reputation. Although the focus is on education in French, the AEFE schools offer lessons in the local language, for example Wolof in Senegal, and world languages such as English, Spanish and Chinese (AEFE, 2014, p. 6). Many of the graduates therefore speak three to four languages fluently when they leave school. More than half of the students in the AEFE network nevertheless decide to study in France after graduating (AEFE, 2016, p. 54). The AEFE therefore works closely with the Campus France organisation, which is briefly presented below.

### 3.3. Tertiary education and science

**Table 8: Key statistics on tertiary education and science in France**

	2019	2015
Number of countries	Campus France: 127	Campus France: 121
Number of universities/colleges abroad	-	TNE: 27 IBCs EFE: 5 Campus France: 327
Number of students		
Number of foreign students	229,623 (2018)	239,409

	2019	2015
Number of students at trans-national higher education (TNE)	n/a	37,000 (of which 5,700 distance learning)
Number of government scholarships awarded (BGF)	11,250 (2018)	12,900
Number of staff	Campus France: 244 + 500 local	Campus France: 222 +500 local (2016, 2017)
Budget (€ million)	Campus France: 27.9 Campus France total managed funds: 125.6	Campus France: 27.7 (2014) Campus France total managed funds: 140
Government financial support (€ million)	94.57	106.23

Within the field of Tertiary education and science, Campus France's mission is “*to promote the French science model and France as a science location internationally, to initiate international scientific cooperation and to promote the mobility of students, teachers and researchers*” (Schneider, 2015, p. 363). It is also an “*industrial and commercial public institution*” under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Campus France was created in 2010 by the merger of the public interest group CampusFrance, the Égide organisation and the international section of the CNOUS (Campus France, 2017).

Campus France's main tasks include managing public scholarship and scientific support programmes, advising international students and organising local information events. As shown in figure 8, it does this all across the world (Campus France, 2020). For example, the Eiffel Excellence Scholarship Programme, comparable to the Fulbright Programme, is funded with 12 million euros each year by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and administered by Campus France (Campus France, 2018, p.42). In the 2019 academic year, 378 students were sponsored, 320 for the Master's course and 58 to pursue a PhD (Campus France, 2019). Campus France's activities are conducted by over 220 employees at the Paris headquarters and 500 employees in the international offices. This international network includes 259 offices (“Espaces”) and branches (“Antennae”) in 127 countries. In order to facilitate contact with students and scientists, the offices are often located directly in universities. Many Campus France offices also share their premises with the Institut français or the local French embassy. Campus France's strategic focus is particularly on the African continent. In recent years, new branches have been opened in Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Burkina Faso and Ghana (Campus France, 2016b, p. 36). This parallels France's larger geopolitical objectives.

The French institutes for research abroad (UMIFRE) are also an important instrument for scientific diplomacy. They operate under the dual supervision of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the National Centre for Scientific Research. UMIFRE is active in 34 countries and supports 150 researchers and 350 doctoral students. It describes its focus as Mediterranean and the Middle East (especially involving archaeology), but has branches on every continent. In addition to research, training, and information dissemination, it describes the support of French diplomacy as one of its four main goals (UMIFRE, 2019).

The Hubert Curien Partnerships are also an important component of French scientific diplomacy. Falling under the remit of Campus France, they promote mobility for researchers. HRC has 54 partner countries. In 2019, 1,333 joint research projects and 4,000 mobile researchers were funded.

### 3.4. Foreign media

**Table 9: Statistics on French foreign media**

	2019	2015
<b>TV</b>		
Number of countries broadcasted to	TV5Monde: 198	France24: 180
Number of languages	TV5Monde: 13 subtitling	-
Number of channels	TV5Monde: 10 France24: 4	TV5Monde: 11 France24: 3
Audience / weekly (million)	TV5Monde: 60 France24: 87.1	TV5Monde: 50 France24: 51
Digital audience / monthly average (million)	TV5Monde: 45.6 (2018) France24: 18	France24: 16.3
Social networks (million, combined)	TV5Monde: 12 France24: 46.5	France24: 21.4
<b>Radio</b>		
Number of countries broadcasted to	RFI: 150	RFI: 150 MCD: 14
Number of languages	RFI: 14 MCD: 1	RFI: 14
Audience / weekly (million)	RFI: 46.5 MCD: 9.8	RFI: 37.3 MCD: 7.3 (2014)
Digital audience / monthly average (million)	RFI: 20.9 MCD: 2.2 (2018)	RFI: 11.9 MCD: 1.3
Social networks (million)	RFI: 23.8	RFI: 10.9 MCD: 2.6
<b>France Médias Monde</b>		
Total weekly aggregate audience (million)	176 (2018)	120
Budget (€ million)	267.4	252.8

France Médias Monde (FMM) is the overarching organisation responsible for French international broadcasting and consists of France 24, Radio France International, and the Monte Carlo Doualiya Arabic-language radio. FMM broadcast in a total of 18 languages, has journalists from over 66 countries, and attracted over 200 million weekly contacts across radio, television, and digital media in 2019 (France Médias Monde, 2020).

As a key player in foreign media, France 24 is a 24-hour news channel that broadcasts its programming on four language-specific channels: French, English, Arabic, and Spanish. It now has network of bureaus located in nearly every country (France 24, 2018). France 24 was founded in 2006 as a “CNN à la française” to report on current world affairs from a French perspective. In its head office in Paris, over 400 journalists from 35 nations work together with a network of several hundred correspondents (France 24, 2017). The Paris office is supported by 160 offices around the world, including a Spanish-language one in Bogota.

Radio France Internationale (RFI) was founded in 1975 in response to the growing popularity of channels such as the BBC World Service and Voice of America. Although French is still at the heart of RFI, radio broadcasts and websites can now be listened to and used in French and 13 other languages, including all the main European languages, Kiswahili, Hausa, Mandingo, and Fulfulde (RFI, 2020). To this end, the station cooperates with over 1,000 partner stations worldwide (CSA, 2016, p. 34).

Above all, the English language offer has been continuously expanded in recent years. At the same time, other foreign-language editorial offices were closed for financial reasons. At the end of 2009, for example, RFI Deutsch broadcast its last programme (RFI Deutsch, 2010). Instead, the station has been increasingly producing programmes in African languages since the mid-2000s. Following the success of the shipments in Hausa (since 2006) and Swahili (since 2010), a service was introduced on Mandinka in October 2015. The number of listeners in West Africa has since risen by 8 per cent (CSA, 2016, p. 7). Of the approximately 40 million weekly listeners worldwide, almost two thirds came from African countries in 2015 (Fiedler & Frère, 2016, p. 77). Their listenership has now risen to nearly 47 million (RFI, 2020). RFI also hosts a podcast for an African audience (RFI, 2018). However, the dominance of RFI is also repeatedly criticized by African media, partly because local stations cannot compete with its resources (Mbog, 2015).

Monte Carlo Doualiya (MCD) is a radio station whose Arab programme is broadcast in the Middle East and parts of Africa (Djibouti, Mauritania, South Sudan). Today, MCD sees itself as a bridge between France and the Arab world, but also between the various Arab countries (MCD, 2013, p. 2). According to a parliamentary report, the channel, with its liberal and secular values, is considered a reliable source of information, especially in war and crisis zones, for example in Iraq or Syria (Soleymieux, 2015). In order to directly involve stakeholders and listeners, MCD increasingly produces its programmes in the broadcasting region, for example in Kuwait, the Arab Emirates and Jordan (CSA, 2016, p. 35). Their total weekly listenership is nearly 10 million (Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam, 2019).

TV5Monde primary stated objective is to “*provide an offer that reflects French and Francophone culture and values in a global media universe*” (Forum de la Performance, 2018, p. 5). France Médias Monde is also a shareholder of the French-speaking television network TV5Monde, founded in 1984, with a stake of almost 13 per cent. The multilateral network is financed primarily by France, but also by Switzerland, Canada, Quebec and the Wallonia-

Brussels Federation. In order to avoid possible competition between France Médias Monde and TV5Monde, an obligation to cooperate was laid down in the abovementioned Treaty (Article 42-1). In December 2014, France Médias Monde and TV5Monde concluded a framework agreement on the basis of which a broad exchange of information took place and several cooperation agreements had already been concluded. For example, the organisations worked together to report on the Burundi elections in July 2015 and developed joint information programmes such as International Affairs and Afrique Press (CSA, 2016, p. 67).

TV5Monde is one of the five largest TV networks in the world (Perrin, 2015). In 2019 it received 76.2 million euros from the French state and had 400 FTEs (Garriaud-Maylam, 2020). TV5Monde broadcasts its programme on 9 regional channels, a children’s channel and a culture channel, with more than two thirds of viewers from Africa joining in (Soleymieux, 2015). In Europe alone, the programme is broadcast in French and offers subtitles in 13 languages (TV5Monde, 2019).

**Table 10: Key figures on French ECP and new media**

<b>Social networks following</b>	
Institut français	Facebook: 568,400 Twitter: 28,500 Instagram: 9,360
Alliance française (2018)	Facebook: 4,000,000 Twitter: 303,000 YouTube: 1.7 million views Instagram: 475,000
France Médias Monde	76 million Twitter followers (across all networks)
<b>Audience / unique monthly visitors (million)</b>	
institutfrancais.com	1.5
alliancefr.org	3.3 (2018)
France Médias Monde channels	63.8

Broadcasters’ websites and interactive platforms are playing an increasingly important role in their programming and distribution. In 2015, around 1.5 billion views were recorded across FMM’s various social media channels. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of followers on Facebook and Twitter also increased by around 50 per cent to 35 million (CSA, 2016, p. 35). That figure now exceeds 75 million (France Médias Monde, 2020). New interactive online tools in particular contributed to this increase. Two examples are briefly presented here: On RFI Savoir, a multilingual knowledge and learning platform of the radio station, users can not only “*learn French, but learn it in French*” (RFI, 2018). France 24’s interactive news site Les Observateurs offers users the opportunity to send in news from all over the world, which is then verified and published by journalists (Les Observateurs, 2017). InfoMigrants, which is a cooperation between FMM and Deutsche Welle to provide a “news and information site for migrants to counter misinformation at every point of their journey,” is another example of

digital tools being employed. Since 2017, InfoMigrants gathered 5 million monthly contacts across all digital environments.

The social media presence of the language and cultural institutes is also substantial. Combined, Institut français and Alliance française have nearly 5 million social media followers and 5 million unique monthly viewers on their website, according to their social media pages and most recent annual reports. Despite some improvements, experts have criticized the relatively slow rollout of digital techniques and outreach.

French foreign cultural and educational policy is also accompanied by an online strategy. The focus here is above all on direct exchange with local civil society. Within the framework of “diplomatie numérique”, or digital diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been continuously expanding its online presence since 1995. President Macron has shown enthusiasm for using digital tools in French ECP. As the Norwegian Atlantic Committee finds, “*Digital diplomacy has been developed too, with a multilingual and pretty successful website for the French ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the growing digitalisation of France’s cultural diplomacy (including francophonie)*” (Charillion, 2018).

Since 2009, the best-known social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter, have also been used. On these platforms, the ministry and its partner organisations are promoted and foreign policy issues are discussed publicly. French diplomats have therefore been receiving social media training as part of their training since 2011 (MAEDI, 2016). Educational and cultural institutions also make use of the possibilities offered by the World Wide Web. The IFprofs educational network of the Institut français is an example of this. France published a new digital strategy in December 2017 that advocates the “promotion of human rights, democratic values and the French language in the digital world” and “strengthening the influence and attractiveness of French digital players” (France Diplomatie, 2020).

## 4. Challenges and future outlook

Culture and language have played a central role in France’s self-image for centuries. France is fortunate to be able to draw on one of the largest cultural networks in the world. However, the reforms of the French cultural, educational and media organisations were by no means a panacea. The Soft Power 30 rankings describe increasing reforms from President Macron as a key determinant in the success of improving France’s image abroad. However, the recent “yellow vests” protests indicate the potential limits of such an agenda. Aside from this recent domestic backlash, what are the challenges facing “diplomatie culturelle et d’influence” abroad?

The increased competition from Anglo-American organisations is a key factor and is largely a result of the prominence of the English language in the international sphere. The rapid rise of English as the predominant language of international politics, economics, and entertainment is accompanied by an increasing loss of importance of French. In Germany, this is illustrated by a significant decline in French lessons at schools and universities (Steinkamp, 2014, p. 87). Even in the new EU countries, the majority of people decided to learn English instead of French—despite the intensified activities of French foreign cultural policy (Pranaityte, 2014, p. 154). Since the French language plays such a central role in France’s cultural policy, this development is viewed as a crucial challenge. Importantly, the loss of significance is relative, not absolute. French is spoken by more than 275 million people worldwide (France

Diplomatie, n.d.) and every year nearly 1 million people take part in the language courses of the Institut français and the Alliance Française (AF, 2018).

Although the institutions have gained financial autonomy as a result of reforms, this financial model also has negative effects. Due to high school fees, French schools abroad, for example, are often criticised as “elite schools” for the upper class. In response to this criticism, the AEFÉ refers in particular to the scholarships offered, which, however, less than 10 per cent of all pupils receive. Experts view this development very critically, also because competition from Anglo-American schools abroad is increasing. More and more parents decide to have their children educated in English. In addition, in a review of foreign education, the French Court of Accounts complained that, despite the diplomatic mandate of the schools, little consideration was given to the geographical priorities of French foreign policy when new schools were opened. In Asia in particular, schools are clearly underrepresented (Corbier, 2016).

The good reputation of French universities and the relatively low tuition fees continue to make France an attractive place to study. Every year almost about half of the 343,000 foreign students in France during the 2017/18 school year hailed from Africa, where it is still the most frequently chosen destination (Civinini, 2018). France has made a concerted effort to attract talented students away from the US and UK, hoping to benefit from the political upheaval in those countries. A successful example of international cooperation in the higher education sector is the Franco-German University (“Université franco-allemande”), an association of more than 180 universities in France and Germany that supports integrated binational and trinational degree programmes (DFH, 2017).

Overall, France is in an enviable position with respect to ECP. It has a wide range of prominent and well-respected institutions. While French no longer holds the title of lingua franca, its prominence in international organisations and widespread use in Africa grants it important advantages. And with other ECP superpowers roiled by political crises, France may have an opportunity to assume some of the roles abandoned by its Anglophone partners. With this in mind, it is clear that despite competing in a more challenging geopolitical environment, French ECP is on strong footing.

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