

The evolution of the diplomatic profession in France and new training requirements

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The diplomatic profession is experiencing changes in how business is conducted, as a result of technological evolution, as well as the increasing complexity of diplomatic networks around the world.

In this context, the demand for training linked to the new expectations and specificities of the different occupations of the diplomat leads to a constant evolution in the field of professional training. Today, diplomatic training focuses more on operational areas and pays particular attention to team management.

The diplomatic profession is not improvised

Whether at the beginning of their training or already experienced, the needs of diplomats in terms of professional development remain the same. The diplomatic profession cannot be improvised; it requires continuous revision, based on the in-depth knowledge of the State and, in particular, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (its missions, human and financial resources, structure, its codes, its various diplomatic, consular and cultural networks and its operators). A vast knowledge of the relevant political and consular networks which the individual is responsible for cultivating and developing is also needed.

Within the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Diplomatic and Consular Institute is responsible for the main activities related to the training of diplomats.

Initial training

Aimed at new recruits who chose to embark on a career in diplomacy, initial training consists of familiarising them with the professional culture of the Ministry, acquiring specific skills and developing a spirit of cohesion and solidarity. In short, it is about giving each diplomat the keys to success by allowing them to bring their own contributions, convictions and vision to the table. While no means exhaustive, the training must be practical and functional. The learning process, while not without its difficulties and complementary training, continues throughout the diplomat's life.

Mid-career training

The aim of the continuous training cycle is to prepare diplomats who are first-time candidates for the post of deputy director within the central administration. To facilitate inter-ministerial development, places are also reserved for civil servants and operators from other government ministries.

Lasting three years, with each year covering 15 short modules, this training cycle is designed to strengthen the management skills of diplomats, deepen their knowledge of security matters and maintain their level of excellence, without neglecting the key issues on France's international agenda.

On July 21, 2016, the mid-career advanced training cycle was endorsed by the School of Management and Human Resources of the French Directorate-General for Public Administration and the Civil Service (DGAFP) for its performance in inter-ministerial advancement training.

Management Seminars

Management seminars are aimed at senior members of the Ministry who, for the first time, are called upon to serve as ambassadors, deputies or heads of foreign ministries abroad. The heads of the central admin-

istration office also benefit from this ad hoc training. Through the use of practical workshops, these seminars emphasise communication, leadership and management skills, as well as diplomatic security and crisis management. They include extensive feedback based on the experience and involvement of key ministry officials.

Training to serve France's foreign policy priorities

Joining the Quai d'Orsay (the historic headquarters of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs) is a vocation that is part of a unique life project. Among the various threads that run through the actions of a French diplomat, France's priorities occupy a central place.

France is a country that has all the attributes of a world power, which leads it to assume all the naturally corresponding obligations:

- A founding member of the European Union, along with Berlin, Paris is, along with Berlin, one of the driving forces of European integration.
- France occupies one of the five permanent seats on the Security Council.
- In a context of redistribution of economic power, the French economy is among the world's leading economies.
- The French language has a decisive influence, thanks to the French-speaking world and its strong ties with Africa.
- The French diplomatic network is the third largest in the world, after the United States and China.
- In the field of culture, it ranks among the most important world powers.

France is a major player on the international stage and has relations with the entire world. The course set by the President of the Republic and the First Minister of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is based on a constant: the world is experiencing a period of great strategic instability that could even be described as a "strategic depression", as well as ruptures of unprecedented magnitude in international affairs, in which the pandemic has played a major role.

In order to meet all these challenges, France has a strong diplomacy, focused on its actions, which are carried out by its diplomats.

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is at the heart of the conception and implementation of French foreign policy, as outlined by the President of the Republic. In this context, there are a number of priorities, among which the following stand out:

- Firstly, taking responsibility for the collective security of citizens both in France and abroad. Our diplomacy focuses on the fight against terrorism; on managing international crises, especially those affecting France, and on restoring peace. It is also about the security of French citizens abroad, as well as that of diplomats. The COVID-19 crisis has reinforced the need for protection and the Ministry has been responsible for the safe return of 370,000 compatriots. This has been a great achievement on the part of the Ministry, which continues to show its commitment to public service. Particular attention must also be paid to information security and cyber security. The diplomat, like any agent, must have a strong digital background, as well as in issues concerning technological revolutions (digital, quantum, health, energy and sustainable environment).
- The second priority concerns the European Union (EU) and the exit of the United Kingdom, sealed by an agreement that we welcome, although we regret the departure of this important partner. This demonstrates the need to implement the agenda of protection and sovereignty promoted by France, the aim of which is to meet the expectations of European citizens. In this respect, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is mobilising in view of the forthcoming French Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2022. This will certainly be an opportunity to strengthen European ties and to address the major issues of concern to the European Union.
- The third priority is the protection of assets common to all human beings, such as climate, biodiversity, health, digital space and education, which can only be preserved through joint, collective action, something France excels at. Other challenges such as global inequality, gender equality, migrants and refugees, as well as their corollary: humanitarian action, must also be considered. It is in this direction that the drafting of the law on mutually-supportive development, presented by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and to be adopted by Parliament in August 2022, is advancing.

- The fourth priority is to strengthen France's attractiveness and the promotion of this attractiveness abroad, whether due to its culture, its language, its scientific research and its businesses. This is what is known as influence diplomacy, economic diplomacy and tourism promotion.
- The fifth priority is the promotion of our values: promoting Europe; the world's public goods; democracy; human rights; and gender equality. This is not only a diplomatic battle, but also one of public diplomacy.

Competence, ethics and the fight against violence and all forms of discrimination: key threads of diplomatic management training

Alongside the main principles underpinning France's action abroad, diplomats must be attentive to what is known as "*le savoir être*"; this refers to the quality and strength of interpersonal relations when working together. All ministry staff, especially supervisory staff, must adhere to this absolute requirement. Currently, a significant part of the actions undertaken in diplomat training deals with interpersonal skills. Training in management skills, at all levels, is systematic. Each official receives specific modules during the course of their career, the aim of which is for the official to develop in an environment conducive to professional advancement.

The example set through hierarchy is closely monitored. The so-called "360-degree" evaluation is part of this logic. It constitutes an important element of assessment of the managerial competencies of the Ministry's senior managers, no matter whether they are in a post or in the central administration. It represents an important element in the modernisation of the human resources management of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which is establishing itself as an important tool for career advancement. It enables civil servants to get to know each other better and to develop in all possible areas.

Ethics, transparency, leading by example, professional equality, rejection of discrimination and violence are the foundations of well-being at work.

In terms of professional ethics, the institutional figure created in 2107 within the Ministry aims to provide confidential advice to officials on notions

linked to ethics; to update the guide on professional ethics; to put together a series of tips made available to officials, and to ensure that they are sensitised and trained in terms of the exercise of professional ethics.

A major national goal of the five-year term of office of the current President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron is gender equality, and is the subject of constant attention. In this regard, the Ministry has created the post of High Official for Equality and has launched an ambitious feminist diplomacy that has borne fruit: awareness-raising and training on professional equality has improved internal practices and also made visible the gender and equality issues faced by officials appointed to diplomatic and consular posts. In fact, more and more women are occupying high-ranking positions and the number of female ambassadors is increasing.

In line with the evolution of French society, the profiles of diplomats have diversified. The Ministry is committed to seeking talent wherever it can be found. To this end, it is breaking with the stereotypes of the academic diplomat, which today are perceived as inaccessible. The recent organisation by the sub-directorate for training of a diplomatic summer academy for young people is a response to the Ministry's demand for diversity.

There are new ways of working, and well-being in the workplace has taken on vital importance. Psychosocial risks and awareness-raising against all forms of violence in the workplace are taken very seriously as a priority in the training of diplomats. In December 2020, an ad hoc unit, known as Zero Tolerance was created, under a unified structure, this has collected all complaints made by civil servants who have been victims or witnesses of sexual violence, discrimination, sexual or emotional harassment, or sexist behaviour in the workplace.

A diverse and agile ministry to deal with crises

Short decision pathways for conception and dissemination

The work of today's diplomat is characterised by an increasing agility that relies on a reactive structure. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the responsiveness of civil servants at all levels, both in the central administration and in posts abroad. One of the characteristics of the — relatively small

ministry compared to others — is its chain of command, with services interacting with each other, making it easy for notes prepared by diplomats to reach a director general, a secretary general and even ministers and secretaries of state without difficulty. By its very nature and purpose, it is a ministry where three-quarters of its staff are based abroad.

A variety of evolving professions

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs offers a wide range of professions. Indeed, the repertoire of ministerial work contains more than 60 different professions for diplomats, which are distributed in different strands: political, economic, consular, communication, cooperation and culture. In contrast to the past, diplomats today can explore any of these areas, as their professional skills are more diverse.

Being a diplomat is both a vocation and a life project: a rich and rhythmic career between the central administration and posts abroad, with rotations every three or four years, which has obvious implications for families. An assignment in another country is always accompanied by either a professional or personal risk: new working environment, country, language and living conditions, accompanied by increasingly varied health and safety issues, in addition to the difficulties encountered by the spouse in finding a job.

To be a diplomat is above all to be a diplomat in practice, especially when difficulties manifest: to ensure the continuity of public service abroad and, in certain cases, to deal with French populations larger than those of some communities in France. It means at times facing health or security risks; it is also about crisis management; being the last to leave when everyone is being evacuated; being able to carry the full workload, especially where the French diplomatic presence is more restricted in terms of personnel.