

The French Academy of Sciences:

Understanding the Role of Academies in Deploying Science Diplomacy

An InsSciDE Case Study

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The strategy of diversification of a national Science Diplomacy can be supported by the Academies which structure a significant part of a country's scientific life. Academies' international activities offer a relay for the initiatives taken by state diplomacy. Beyond the network constituted by their members, national and foreign, academies have typically become, since the last quarter of the 20th century, actors pursuing their own international policy combining universal values and the will to promote the science of their own country.

In order to rely on this resource, national diplomacy (or in the future a European Union diplomacy) must understand the characteristics of these institutions, which are the result of a long-term historical construction, and also envision the benefits of supporting their joint action and networking. Several features have evolved considerably since the latter part of the 20th century. Diplomats will do well to become familiar with their Academies' culture, recognize their specific objectives and take into account their strengths and weaknesses regarding international action. The example of the French Academy of Sciences cannot be generalized to all such institutions. It is nevertheless a case study that allows us to understand the main elements structuring the international action of these unique actors of science diplomacy.



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