

Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

Ambassador for digital affairs

2020 Annual Report Summary

Digital diplomacy has intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic. This period has witnessed the generalization of digital tools' daily use and has strengthened the importance of mastering the cyberspace for global geopolitical players. In 2020, four trends are shaping, if not threatening, the cyberspace's balance: (i) the rise of two major conflicting digital models, in the United States and China, is putting the Internet's unity at risk, (ii) a few companies are consolidating their monopolistic positions, thereby threatening both fair competition and democratic security, (iii) the multiplication of negative externalities is linked to the growing reliance on digital technology, and (iv) some States are exploiting the Internet for authoritarian purposes.

France's digital diplomacy intends to effectively insure that the digital revolution, which carries tremendous potential for economic and human progress, continues to be a tool of emancipation and that its founding principles – freedom, openness, uniqueness – and its shared and multi-stakeholder governance are preserved.

Digital diplomacy is also working to **reinforce French and European digital sovereignty**, particularly through four European projects: (i) guaranteeing security in cyberspace and protecting our democracies that are faced with the dissemination of terrorist content and campaigns of information manipulation, (ii) winning the battle for innovation, (iii) consolidating the European model of protection of rights and regulations at the global level and (iv) facilitating access to essential digital infrastructures while improving their security.

In 2020, several lines of action have structured the Ambassador for Digital Affairs' mission. It was carried out alongside other departments of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and consisted in:

- **Strengthening the security and stability of cyberspace** by participating in the construction of national (C4, ANSSI), bilateral (strategic dialogues with the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia) and multilateral (EU Internet Forum, UN) cyber capacities; construction and defense of French positions within the Open-Ended Working Group aiming to set up an international normative framework of responsibility in cyberspace; promotion and dissemination of the Paris Call for trust and security in cyberspace in order to participate in the effort to federate an international and multi-stakeholder ecosystem; definition and implementation of Christchurch Call commitments by their community; participation in the work of national, European and international communities on the challenges of combating the manipulations of information.
- **Promoting democratic values and the French language** in international fora and initiatives (OIF, OGP, Partnership on Information and Democracy); promotion of the French open government model to our European and international partners.

- **Contributing to the international attractiveness of the French digital innovation ecosystem, in particular French Tech;** contribution to the launch of the Tech for Good Call; setting up regular exchanges with French, European and global digital players.
- **Participating in the governance of the Internet and its regulation;** representation, alongside other French contributors, of French positions within the competent international fora for network and Internet governance (ICANN and IGF); defense of net neutrality and promotion of open and interoperable standards; mobilization against the commodification of the “.org” domain, a key internet extension for many partners.

In addition, the Ambassador for Digital Affairs has also taken part in the digital improvement of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs in 2020 by:

- **Monitoring and anticipating the development of innovations and disruptive technologies, especially artificial intelligence,** and promoting the emergence of an international governance to supervise them; daily monitoring and regular dialogue with the major online service providers; structuring of a coherent and unified French doctrine on artificial intelligence, during a year marked by the launch of the Global Partnership for Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) by France and 13 other states.
- **Increasing the digital capabilities of the French diplomacy;** bringing together contributions from several government departments and mobilizing the European ecosystem of digital commons to initiate a digital common project aiming at monitoring changes in major online service providers’ terms of use.
- **Supporting the administration in the increase of digital skills within the ministry.** Participation in the animation of the digital diplomats network and in training sessions on digital topics; coordination, information sharing and construction of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs digital roadmap (organization and follow-up of a Digital Direction Committee).