

La délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France

(General Delegation for the French language and the languages of France)

Of all the bonds that link individuals in society, **language** is the strongest, because it constitutes the foundation stone for the feeling of **belonging to a community**. This bond is constantly changing, as a result of increasing globalisation and the building of the European Union. The public authorities therefore need to promote **a language policy**, which ensures that the **French language remains pre-eminent** on French soil, but which also contributes to **social unity** and helps to foster **cultural diversity** in Europe and throughout the world.

The Ministry of Culture and Communication, as the ministry responsible for the French language, has a special responsibility to implement this policy, together with various other ministerial departments.

« *The language of the Republic is French* » (art. 2 of the French Constitution)

Since the Villers-Cotterêts Edict in 1539, the French language has officially been a component of national identity. Today, the Constitution (article 2) specifies that the language of the Republic is French, while remaining open to the use of other languages. La délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France (DGLFLF) is a government department whose role is to guide national language policy at inter-ministerial level. Attached to the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the department's role is to examine, pilot and co-ordinate issues, and to track the application of legislative and statutory mechanisms (Law of 4th August 1994 on the use of the French language). It is supported by a network of partner organisations including the Senior Council for the French Language and the General Commission for Terminology and Neologisms.

- In 1966 Prime Minister Georges Pompidou created within his own office the *Senior Committee for the defence and expansion of the French language (Haut comité pour la défense et l'expansion de la langue française)*, which later became the *Senior Committee for the French Language (Haut comité pour la langue française)*.
- In 1984 this senior committee was replaced by two new bodies, the *Consultative Committee (le Comité consultatif)* and the *General Commission (Commissariat général)*, which, as of 1986, reported to the Ministry for Francophone Affairs.
- These bodies were then replaced in 1989 by the *Senior Council for the French Language (Conseil supérieur de la langue française)* and la *Délégation générale à la langue française*.
- In 1993, la *Délégation générale à la langue française*, in a logical move, reported to the Ministry of Culture, as the latter was also in charge of Francophone Affairs.
- When the Francophone Affairs became a separate department in 1996, la *délégation générale* was integrated into the Ministry of Culture.
- In 2001, the title of the department changed to *Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France* in order to mark the government's acknowledgement of the linguistic diversity of our country.

Five priorities for a language policy : the DGLFLF's mandate

Guarantee our citizens the right to the French language

Our citizens have the right, enshrined in law, to receive information and express themselves in their own language.

The DGLFLF monitors and co-ordinates at inter-ministerial level the application of legislation relating to the French language, and specifically the law of 4th August 1994. These provisions help to guarantee the health and safety of consumers and employees by imposing the use of French in a wide range of circumstances of daily life. The DGLFLF provides support by setting up facilities for interpreting into French during major events (seminars, conferences etc.).

Enable the French language to serve social unity

Having a command of the French language is a pre-requisite for personal fulfilment, social and professional integration, and for access to knowledge and culture.

The DGLFLF supports actions to enable all individuals to master the French language and to combat linguistic exclusion. As part of this mission, it participated, for example, in the establishment of the Initial French Diploma (Diplôme initial de langue française - DILF) the aim of which was to ease the integration of immigrants into French society.

Enrich and modernise the French language

Our language is constantly being enriched with new terms that reflect the reality of contemporary life. Expressions used on a day-to-day basis follow a natural path of evolution, but in more specific areas and in particular in technical fields, this progression must be coupled with a support system.

The DGLFLF is key to the inter-ministerial initiative to enrich the French language. It supports and coordinates the actions taken by the various players who participate in the establishment of neologisms (General Commission for terminology and Neologisms, the Académie française, specialised committees, partner ministries etc.) and is responsible for making them available to the public.

Some terms from the terminology and neologism committees have become part of every-day language.

Some of these have rapidly broken the boundaries of specialist terminology and are used by the public at large. Among these are terms that have existed for some time, such as, *logiciel*, *puce*, *baladeur* (software, chip, walkman). More recent terms include: *monospace*, *covoiturage*, *v.t.t.*, *soit vélo tout terrain*, *remue-ménages* (people-carrier, car-sharing, mountain bike, brainstorming). And in relation to Internet : *courriel*, *navigateur*, *pirate* (email, browser, hacker) etc.

Promote linguistic diversity

The rapid increase in commerce and contacts between different languages has caused our policy to turn towards fostering multilingualism, in particular at a European level.

This strategy calls for concrete actions to be implemented in order to promote

- life-long learning of foreign languages,
- understanding of other languages to facilitate communication, in particular those in the same family of languages (establishment and publication of training methods in this technique of communication),
- implementation of a new translation policy which takes into account technological changes (promotion of translation-associated professions, establishment of translation aid networks, development of automatic translation).

« *Translation is the language of Europe* » (Umberto Eco)

Promote and enhance the languages of France

Alongside the French language, there are regional or minority languages which also form part of our cultural identity constituting a living, creative and intangible heritage. They are stakeholders in the policy to foster cultural and linguistic diversity.

The DGLFLF helps to promote this legacy by encouraging contemporary works in the languages of France. It supports the enhancement of these languages by means of theatre, songs, books and all disciplines where language is the tool of creation. It plays a part in extending their application by promoting their usage in modern cultural and technical fields, such as the audio-visual and multimedia spheres.

Amongst the hundreds of languages present in our country, *languages of France* refers to those languages that have been spoken by French citizens on French soil for long enough to belong to the common heritage, and which are not the official language of any other state, including « regional » languages such as Flemish, Basque, Corsican, Creole and Tahitian, and non-territorial minority languages such as the Arabic dialects, Romany, Berber and Yiddish.

La Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France contributes to the promotion of the French language in Europe and across the world. Present in five continents, the French language is the fundamental tie between a community of 63 members, associates or observers of the International Organisation of the French-speaking World (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie - OIF). Twenty-nine countries have chosen French to be their official language. It is also one of the official languages of the International Olympic Committee and is a working language in most international organisations, notably those which are associated with the United Nations and the European Union. In the EU, French is the **only language** which is both officially spoken in more than two states (like German) **and** enjoys international influence (like English or Spanish).

French as a language of international communication

Cristal, toile, abîme, tintinnabuler... What do these words have in common ? They have all been selected to be part of the family of « ten words » chosen each year during *French language week* to be brought to life by calling upon all populations to express their linguistic imagination and to demonstrate how the French language is a tool for social bonding and for personal fulfilment, by means of numerous original events (shows, meetings, writing workshops, competitions etc.).

French language week: www.semainedf.culture.fr

Informing the public

The French language is the business of all French citizens, who are the guarantors of how it is used and who play a part in how it develops. The DGLFLF carries out activities to make society as a whole aware of the issue of language and provides the public with documentary resources.

Website: www.dglflf.culture.gouv.fr

The DGLFLF website presents information on its activities and offers on-line resources such as the FRANCETERME database, which is a compilation of all new terms publicised in the Official Gazette. It also provides answers to general questions associated with language. How are words formed ? How has French become enriched by contact with other languages ? What are the links between the State and the French language ?

Publications

The DGLFLF compiles a set of regularly updated publications concerning various topics, such as the Law of 4th August 1994, technical vocabulary, languages of France etc. The full list of these publications can be sent on request or can be consulted on the Delegation's website.

Resource centre

The DGLFLF possesses rich documentary resources dedicated to the French language, to the French-speaking world and the languages of France (linguistics, language history and law, dictionaries and specialised vocabulary, the status of French in the world etc.). Public access to the resources centre is available on demand.

The DGLFLF

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Missions

Use and propagation of the French language +33 1 40 15 36 82

Legal matters

Multilingualism, French in the world, French-speaking world

Use of French in the scientific community

Language learning, anti-illiteracy campaign

and territorial action +33 1 40 15 36 86

French language learning and action in education

Anti-illiteracy campaign

Language development and modernisation +33 1 40 15 36 95

Terminology and neologisms

Language electronic processing

Languages of France +33 1 40 15 36 91

Regional, minority and non-territorial languages

Linguistic practice observatory

Communication and Public awareness +33 1 40 15 36 83

Events, shows, public relations, press relations,

Resource Centre

The DGLFLF also acts as secretariat to the Senior Committees for the French language and to the General Commission for terminology and neologisms and co-ordinates the linguistic practice observatory.