



# MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

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# **European Perspectives on Rare Disciplines**

## **The German-French Mapping of Rare Disciplines**

# Is there a new topic in France?

**2014:** publication of the Rare Disciplines report by the CPU (now France Universités) at the request of Minister G. Fioraso:

- The Rare Disciplines issue also concerns France
- Need for quantitative and qualitative data
- Objective: **not to lose fields of expertise** through lack of visibility and to support specialities with low numbers of academics



**How to move from observation to implementation?**

# Is there a new topic in France?

**2015- 2016:** meetings of the 5 University Presidents' Conferences  
(Germany, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland)

- Interesting topic but how to develop it?
- Is it possible to adapt the German methodology to other higher education and research systems?

**Decision on a French-German pilot study to determine the feasibility of adapting the German method to another higher education system, initially in the field of Classical studies.**

## 2016 to date: understanding the German way

- Stays at MAKF to understand criteria development and data construction,
- To discover / assimilate the process of integrating a new discipline into mapping,
- To discover / assimilate the process of monitoring the mapping, in particular the changes in the name of certain specialities, the reasons for exclusion from the mapping
- Objective: in the face of numerous questions, including epistemological ones, not to lose a field of expertise through lack of visibility and to support specialities with low numbers

**Constant exchanges and cross-questioning are necessary to develop a methodology adapted to the French context.**

For instance, the existence of different bodies of “teacher-researchers” (MCF-PR) and researchers (CR-DR) where on the German side only “*Professuren*” are listed, the existence of “grandes écoles”, etc.

## 2017: are the available data on 'disciplines' contributory?

- Denomination of CNU (training) and CoNRS (research) sections are too large
- Data on degree titles since the transition to the LMD (Bologna process) are too broadly based
- The data from the HCERES self-evaluation reports, by group of institutions and over 5-year cycles, are too heterogeneous and do not allow a consolidated national view to be built up

→ **Need to collect information directly from academics through a survey.**

## 2018-2019: several pre-test surveys online

- Designing a questionnaire
- Testing the feasibility of an online survey and its reception by academics

# How to create a dynamic between different actors?

## Cooperation with the MAKF:

- Seminars with presentation of MAKF work to help French actors to understand the issues and challenges
- Transparent communication on the difficulties encountered on both French and German sides and understanding how MAKF has overcome these difficulties in the past
- The issue seems obvious at first glance, but its study opens up questions that are sometimes unforeseen, such as the link between high school and HE, or the importance of certain Rare Disciplines for the vitality of other specialities, sometimes larger,...

**In order to stay on course, French-German cooperation acted as a compass so as not to lose sight of the objective: to identify Rare Disciplines and produce a common observation method.**

# How to create a dynamic between different actors?

**2020:** creation of a steering committee (CoPil):

- To involve and federate the different actors: MESR, FU, CNU, CoNRS, thematic alliances and institutions = 10 members
  - CoPil is a s a guarantee of impartiality due to its composition
- **Need transparent and clear communication**

A common rule: **a discipline is considered as rare because the number of academics is limited/small and if the speciality meets the defining criteria (decline or emerge).**



# How to create a dynamic between different actors?

## 2020: communication → creation of a MESR Rare Disciplines webpage

- Presentation of the Rare Disciplines process
- Presentation of the French-German cooperation
- Official notifications online Rare Disciplines

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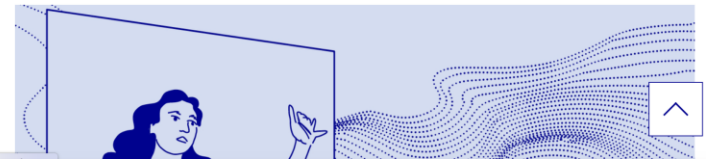
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## Cartographie des disciplines rares

L'une des missions de l'État est de veiller au développement et à la protection du patrimoine intellectuel, scientifique et culturel, en accompagnant en particulier les disciplines dites rares, dont les effectifs d'enseignants-chercheurs, de chercheurs et d'étudiants diminuent parfois, alors même que leur intérêt scientifique demeure. C'est aussi d'accompagner les disciplines émergentes qui trouvent difficilement leur place dans le paysage institutionnel. Il est donc essentiel d'élaborer une cartographie de ces disciplines qui représentent un véritable potentiel pour la vitalité des sciences et leurs dynamiques.



# Results from the French work

## 2020-2023: 10 steering committees (CoPil) :

- CoPil decides on the work to be undertaken, validates the method, **examines applications for Rare Disciplines recognition and decides on the appropriateness of Rare Disciplines recognition** either for 2 years or in observation status when 1 criterion is not met
- CoPil is a communication channel for the scientific community and policy makers

**CoPil kept the MAKF Rare Disciplines definition criteria, knowing that the criterion on the number of academics per institution = 3 Professors maximum per institution is for us provisional.**

**A reflection is underway to combine this criterion with the number of Masters degrees = less than 10 on the whole territory to be recognised as a Rare Discipline ?**

# Results from the French work

## 2021: national online survey Rare disciplines

- 1,726 usable responses, **83.4% of respondents reported a scarcity situation**, 72.1% agreed to be contacted again and 73.1% wished to be included in an expertise database.
- **6,504 occurrences of specialities considered rare and 7,054 free comments to explain the scarcity situation.**
- Average age of respondents = 50.3 years, i.e. experienced academics

# Results from the French work

## 2021: national online survey Rare disciplines

- 5 categories proposed in the questionnaire to define scarcity of each speciality:

Emerging teaching: 23.6% / Emerging research: 28.6%

Changing teaching: 12.1 / Changing research: 12.1%

Teaching in decline: 43.5% / Research in decline: 43.5%

**Rare teaching by nature: 61.1% / Rare research by nature: 48.8%**

Rare teaching for other reasons: 9.5% / Rare research for other reasons: 9.8%

- Establishment of a working group of academics who consider their speciality to be in a situation of scarcity = 40 groups involved in a Rare Disciplines recognition
- Official notifications for Rare Disciplines available online

# Results from the French work

## 2022-2023: communication

- A web page to present the scheme and communicate on the recognised specialities Small Disciplines: <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/cartographie-des-disciplines-rares-46362> + MAKF web page on French-German cooperation : [https://www.kleinaeche.de/beitraege/blogbeitrag?tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bnews%5D=129&cHash=f21c5126dee8c279ef58ca951f80fdab](https://www.kleinaeche.de/beitraege/blogbeitrag?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=129&cHash=f21c5126dee8c279ef58ca951f80fdab)
- Participation in various conferences: EUCOR, Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft (ÖFG), HRK and French scientific conferences to present and discuss Rare Disciplines with academics

# 20 specialties recognised as Rare Disciplines

## Rare Disciplines:

- **Humanities and Social Sciences:** languages of France (Breton and Celtic, Franco-Provençal, Occitan), Burmese Studies, Macedonian Studies, Peul Studies, Rromani, Hittitology, Javanese,...
- **Health:** Vestibular disorders, NephroOncology
- **Engineering science:** Papermaking engineering
- **Natural and earth sciences:** Pedology, Lichenology

## Rare Disciplines under observation status:

- **Humanities and Social Sciences:** Archaeogeography, History of law and institutions, Music applied to visual arts

# 20 specialties recognised as Rare Disciplines

Examples of specialities under investigation

- **Humanities and Social Sciences:** Greco-Latin Studies, Egyptology, Indo-European Languages, Ergonomics, Jewish Studies, Old Javanese Studies, French Sign Language...
- **Health:** Physical and rehabilitation medicine, Officinal mycology
- **Physics / chemistry:** Crystallography

# What are the impacts in France?

Taking into account the Rare Disciplines theme:

- An action sheet Rare Disciplines has been added to **the Minister's action sheets**
- **2 university presidents** appointed within “France Universités” **to monitor the process**
- The working groups consider the creation of a Rare Disciplines recognition dossier to be structuring for the development of their speciality  
As examples : the Pedology working group is currently working on the creation of a national master, recruitment of a Professorship for music applied to visual arts,...



# What are the impacts in France?

## Ongoing reflection on means of support:

- Introduce the issue of Rare Disciplines into **strategic management dialogues and performance-based contracts of objectives and means** between university/institution and the HE Ministry (KPI on rare disciplines)
- **Inclusion of Rare Disciplines items in the evaluation process** of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES)
- Support for the **creation of junior tenure tracks** → fast track for Professor positions
- Support when **submitting a research project to the National Research Agency (ANR)**
- Organisation of meetings/seminars with academic communities

# Evolution in France?

The question of the label and its use is addressed...after 2 years.

Direct discussion with the President of universities at the moment of “**objectives and performances**” dialog → to challenge their ability to make RD as a part of their strategy.

Several ministries are involved: evolution of the steering committee toward an **inter-ministry committee**

# What are the impacts in France?

## 5 Rare Disciplines projects funded through the UFA-DFH 2022 call for projects:

- Dritte Konferenz über die Sprachen des linguistisch Croissant /3es rencontres sur les parlers du Croissant : Universität Hamburg / CNRS Délégation Île-de-France Villejuif
- Individuelle Lebenserfahrungen in Zeiten großer politischer Umbrüche: literarische und historische Zugänge zur iranischen Welt in der Gegenwart /Vies privées et grands bouleversements historiques dans le monde iranien contemporain : approches littéraires et historiques : Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg /Université Sorbonne Nouvelle
- Der Effekt des Kulturerbes. Erfahrungen mit der Weitergabe zwischen Brüchen und Kontinuitäten/L'effet patrimoine. Les expériences de transmission entre ruptures et continuités : Europa-Universität Viadrina / Centre Marc Bloch Berlin
- Konferenz zu den Sprachen der Nuba-Berge / 4e colloque sur les langues des monts Nouba :Universität zu Köln /CNRS Délégation Ile-de-France Villejuif /University of Khartoum (Sudan / Soudan)
- Kunst und Diplomatie. Kulturpolitische Akteur:innen und ihre Primärquellen in Berlin und Paris/Art et diplomatie. Les acteurs de la politique culturelle et leurs sources primaires à Berlin et Paris : Technische Universität Berlin / Institut national d'histoire de l'art