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ONCE THE SÈVRES PORCELAIN FACTORY,  
NOW THE CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES  
PÉDAGOGIQUES



**A place of creativity  
and innovation:  
open to the world**



## THE CIEP TODAY

CIEP is a state institution which works on behalf of France's Ministry of Education at international level. It also performs activities for other French ministries - Foreign and European Affairs, Higher Education, Culture and Communication -, and draws on a network of experts and national and international partners in carrying out its activities, as well as on the know-how of a 250-strong team.

It focuses on two areas: education (general, vocational and higher education; recognition of qualifications) and languages (French as a foreign language, assessment and certification in French, foreign languages and mobility).

A venue for seminars, providing opportunities to discuss and find out more about key issues, CIEP also boasts a Documentary Resource Centre. It publishes three issues of the *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres* each year. This journal is a forum for debate, analysis and information on major education issues from an international angle.



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## 1756 – 1876

### THE ROYAL PORCELAIN FACTORY, A PLACE OF CREATIVITY

In the mid-eighteenth century, Louis XV, on the advice of his mistress, the Marquise de Pompadour, decided to open a porcelain factory in Sèvres. At the time, the whole of Europe was fascinated by this “white gold”. The only place where hard porcelain was produced was the Meissen factory in Saxony. Commercial competition took the form of emulation. Ideally located on the road linking Paris and Versailles, the Sèvres Royal Porcelain Factory quickly became a showcase for French know-how.

Nestling on the hillside, it took three years to build, and was finally completed in 1756. The king himself invested in the project. He went to great lengths to acquire the secret of the composition of hard porcelain, and, in 1763, bought the formula. In 1767, a kaolin quarry was discovered in Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche. From then on, Sèvres had the raw materials and the infrastructure enabling it to lead the way in European porcelain making. Famous artists and engineers, together with nearly 200 employees, all working under a special statute, including around fifty women, worked at Sèvres. The women specialised in making porcelain flowers. Sèvres’ reputation also grew as the result of another technique, biscuit firing.

The Royal Porcelain Factory had its own sales and exhibition room, which meant it could sell its works on-site. Prices were marked, there was no question of bargaining!

The years before and after the French Revolution were difficult times for the Factory. However, things began to look up with the arrival of Alexandre Brongniart. Trained as a Civil Engineer and a member of the Academy of Sciences, he was appointed as Director, from 1800 to 1847. It was his idea to classify the pieces and set up the Ceramics Museum. He was a driving force behind the introduction of new techniques and adapted design work to suit the tastes of the era.

Under the Second Empire, the concept of industrial art began to develop. In 1877, a new Factory opened on the banks of the Seine and the old building was abandoned.

Since 2010, the museum and the factory merged to become a single institution: Sèvres-Cité de la Céramique. Here, the know-how and techniques of the past combine with a commitment to the future through creative



## 1881 – 1940

### SEVRES TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE FOR YOUNG WOMEN

In 1881, French deputy Camille Sée put forward a bill to set up a teacher training college for young women. The Minister, Jules Ferry, decided to house it at Sèvres. Charles le Cœur, the architect, transformed the former Porcelain Factory into a boarding school for young women. The first Head was appointed, Mrs Jules Favre. Two sections, Literature and Science, were set up. The girls studied for 3 years. The college rules were strict, and the teachers were carefully selected. Lessons included all the subjects suitable for young girls, in line with the principle “equal but different”. They were there to develop character and become used to a hard and contemplative life.

The *Sévriennes*, who had to pass competitive entry examinations, became the elite of the female teaching corps. An experimental education in the sciences was developed thanks to some exceptional teachers: Marie Curie and Paul Langevin. They set up a laboratory and students began to perform experiments. There were strong characters in the Literature section too: Ferdinand Brunot and Paul Desjardins.

In the 1920s, the status of the college changed. Under the authority of the Department of National Schools and the Fine Arts, it

underwent radical changes. Anna Amieux, who was Head from 1919 to 1936, set up a teaching practice school (a precursor to experimental secondary schools) and a Resource Centre, and began to promote international awareness.

The Bérard Decree, adopted in 1924, gave the same status to secondary education for girls as for boys. This was a shift to “equal and identical” education. The college buildings were converted to cater for pupils from nursery to baccalauréat level. Eugénie Cotton, Head from 1936 to 1941, breathed new life into the college. She raised the standard of science teaching and developed laboratory and research activities. In 1936, at her instigation, the college was attached to the Ministry of Higher Education.

In 1940, war forced staff and students to leave the college. The *Sévriennes* were never again to return to this site. The college moved to a number of sites before finally settling in Boulevard Jourdan and Montrouge.

In 1985, it merged with the teacher training college for young men in the Rue d’Ulm, thus finally establishing equal status between men and women. This had taken a whole century.

## FROM 1945 TO THE PRESENT

### THE CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D’ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, A PLACE FOR OPENNESS TO THE WORLD

In 1945, Gustave Monod, General Inspector of State Education chose Sèvres as the site to set up, on 30 June, the Centre international d’études pédagogiques, which he saw as a place for people to meet, share and discuss ideas. He launched a series of bold education reforms: new classes, experimental secondary schools and a new status for teachers, etc.

As a partner in this renaissance in training French and foreign teaching staff during the 1960s, CIEP also built its reputation as a centre for comparative education studies. The resource centre developed, focusing on comparative analysis of education systems, international comparisons and training courses on international issues.

During the 1990s, CIEP began working on cooperation in education and became involved in European projects. Professional careers in cooperation became more developed. Discussions were able to draw on documentary resources and on the *Revue internationale d’éducation de Sèvres*.

From the outset, CIEP has specialised in French as a Foreign Language (FFL). A

testing laboratory for pedagogical innovation, the CIEP is a centre where organisations and experts come together. With the transformation of FFL into a university discipline, CIEP gradually assumed the role of a training and expert assessment body.

The courses held at the centre since 1967 have given way to “Summer and Winter Schools for Careers in French worldwide (BELC)”

Since 1985, the centre has been tasked with managing the teaching and administrative aspects of national qualifications, tests and diplomas in French as a Foreign Language (DEL/DALF/TCF).

In addition to this portfolio of activities, CIEP now also manages mobility programmes, supports innovation in language teaching and deals with the recognition of qualifications.