

## France in Focus 2022-2023

*A joint project of the US Embassy in Paris, and the Smithsonian Institution*

### **Program Overview:**

The US Embassy in Paris and the Smithsonian's Office of International Relations and Smithsonian Science Education Center have developed a unique program, France in Focus, that invites students and educators to connect across the globe and focus on issues of sustainability. The 2021-2022 virtual exchange engaged 850 students and their educators from the U.S., France, and French overseas regions. The France in Focus project leverages community research guides from the [Smithsonian Science for Global Goals project](#), and engages students in virtual exchange on the [eTwinning platform](#) provided by Erasmus+.

The 2022-2023 program is designed for students to engage with the guide entitled [Biodiversity! How do we balance the needs of people with the needs of other living things?](#)

### **Program Goals:**

- Students engage in activities from the *Biodiversity!* guide to explore their role in biodiversity and sustainability in their own communities.
- Students engage with peers internationally through the eTwinning platform to understand global-local interconnection and share knowledge about their experiences and their communities' solutions.
- Students converse with international experts in the field.
- Students are equipped with the skills and knowledge to move toward a capstone project, focused on biodiversity in their own community.

### **How do students engage with the content? What is the exchange component like?**

Classrooms from different regions are paired together throughout the course of the project to increase the opportunity for exchange. Additionally, Synchronous and Asynchronous opportunities are provided, as well as a final capstone project:

- **Synchronous "Live" Sessions:** Throughout the course of the program, the Smithsonian and US Embassy in Paris jointly offer four "Live" sessions where students in all our classrooms can engage and immerse themselves in the topic in real time. These sessions are also recorded for those who are not able to attend. Live sessions include an introduction to the session topic, interactive activities, an interview or conversation with an expert in the field, and preparation for asynchronous work after the session.
- **Asynchronously:** The program leverages the eTwinning platform, which is designed specifically for student interactions. In anticipation of the program, training videos and office hours are offered for eTwinning.
- **Capstone project:** Optional final project that is student-initiated, student-designed, and student-led. Students focus on taking action in their own communities based on what they have learned through the program content. They then have the opportunity to share their capstone experience in a showcase session with experts from the field.

- **Other opportunities:** Because this program is designed to meet the needs of classrooms, students, and their educators, we invite paired classrooms to explore additional ways to foster exchange over the course of the program.

**When will this year’s sessions take place? What are the topics being covered?**

Live sessions will be hosted Thursdays from 9-10am Eastern/3-4pm Paris. Session dates are:

Date	Session Title
September 29, 2022	Introduction to the project: What does biodiversity mean, and how is it related to us and our community?
October 20, 2022	What does biodiversity look like in your community and is there balance?
November 17, 2022	What are the conflicts between people and other living things in your community?
December 15, 2022	How can I take action to balance the needs of living things in my community?
TBD May 2023	Capstone Showcase

**Who is eligible to participate?**

France in Focus is designed for high school classrooms. The program is designed for entire class participation, meaning a teacher and their students must all commit to participating. Students must be at least 13 years old to participate. Classrooms of all subject matter are welcome to participate! Previous participating classrooms have included environmental science, civics, English, social studies, French, and literature classes. All sessions will be conducted in English.

**What is required of educators?**

- Collect and submit Smithsonian's student releases, signed by parents and guardians
- Enroll yourself and your students in the eTwinning platform
- Convene your class to either attend the "live" sessions, or watch the recording
- Connect with your paired teacher(s) and classrooms in another region to deepen students' learning experiences
- Encourage students to recognize their own existing knowledge of their community as a starting point
- Keep in mind that there are no "right" answers – students may have very different ideas and that is good! Some of the topics explored are challenging. Be prepared to support students in conversations about controversial issues.

**What is required of students?**

- Participate in the live sessions, or watch the recordings
- Complete asynchronous work, and upload to eTwinning
- Collaborate with classmates and other students in your paired classroom
- Optionally take part in a capstone project of your choosing January-April 2023
- Be respectful of other students and presenters during the live sessions, and throughout the program

**What kind of support does Smithsonian provide?**

- Provide a teacher training session in early September
- Design, lead and facilitate live sessions and program content.
- Provide a program outline with goals and activities ahead of each session
- Provide office hours for educators or students every-other week
- Provide additional training on eTwinning
- Available by email or Zoom for additional support:
  - Katherine Pedersen Blanchard: [BlanchardKP@si.edu](mailto:BlanchardKP@si.edu)
  - Alexa Mogck: [MogckA@si.edu](mailto:MogckA@si.edu)

### **How do I sign up?**

To enroll your class for the 2022-2023 France in Focus program, please fill out this form: <https://forms.office.com/r/E3JdzvQ0dy> We will begin sending program communications in August.

### **What if I have additional questions?**

Please reach out to Katherine Pedersen Blanchard at [BlanchardKP@si.edu](mailto:BlanchardKP@si.edu) or Alexa Mogck at [Mogck@si.edu](mailto:Mogck@si.edu)

You can also read more about the program through our blog series here:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/earth-optimism/tag/smithsonian-in-france/>