Beat: Technology

FRANCE OUTGROWS CES BY COMBINING INNOVATION SOVEREIGNTY INCLUSION WITH VIVATECH

JEFF BEZOS & BERNARD ARNAULT TO ATTEND

Paris, Washington DC, 15.06.2026, 21:20 Time

USPA NEWS - We are about to cover this year's VivaTech in Paris for USPA, as usual, ten years after the very first edition launched by Maurice Levy and his teams. What began as an ambitious French experiment has now become one of the world's leading tech gatherings, a place where Europe's largest economy positions itself not just as a host, but as a genuine driver of innovation, digital sovereignty and inclusive growth. In the space of a decade, VivaTech has grown from a promising conference into a global benchmark that rivals and, in many ways, has overtaken the CES in Las Vegas in terms of vision, diversity of voices and openness to the general public.

OPENING CEREMONY WITH LVMH BERNARD ARNAULT CEO & MAURICE LEVY

The opening ceremony, held on the morning of 17 June from 9:15 to 9:45, set the tone. Maurice Levy, the architect and long?time guardian of VivaTech, took the stage alongside Bernard Arnault, CEO of LVMH, France's largest private fortune and one of the most respected entrepreneurs in Europe, who also chairs major media outlets such as Les Echos (French Economic Journal) and Le Parisien. Together, they reminded the audience that VivaTech is not just another trade show, but a strategic bet: that France can be a crossroads where global tech leaders, investors, policymakers, startups and civil society all meet to "design the future of tech".

AMAZON'S CEO JEFF BEZOS TO ATTEND THE 10th VIVATECH LARGEST TECH VENUE- IN PARIS

This 10th anniversary edition also featured the announcement of Jeff Bezos's participation and the Bloomberg Awards ceremony, sending a strong signal to the international scene: Paris is no longer just a spectator of the digital revolution. It has become one of its stages. With 180,000 attendees, 4,000 exhibitors, 450 speakers and more than 14,000 startups and 3,600 investors from early?stage ventures to unicorns and centaurs VivaTech now offers a critical mass that few global tech events can match. The motto "Lead the Future" did not remain a slogan; it was visible in every aisle of the Porte de Versailles venue.

DESIGNING THE FUTURE: AI IMPACT, SOVEREIGNTY AND ETHICS

A decade in, VivaTech has clearly chosen its battlefields. Under the overarching banner "Designing the Future of Tech", this year's themes insisted that "AI Impact, not illusion" must guide both public policy and corporate strategy. Sessions explored how artificial intelligence can boost productivity, transform entire industries and reshape work, while still respecting democratic values, privacy and fundamental rights.

From green energy, mobility and Greentech to cybersecurity, health and longevity, the program reflected a French and European concern: how to reconcile technological acceleration with sovereignty and ethics. The CEO Summit and the Tech Leaders Summit brought together global executives, regulators and founders to discuss digital infrastructure, cloud independence, data governance and the risks of over?reliance on non?European platforms. France's Minister of Economy and Finance, Roland Lescure used his keynote to frame AI not just as a productivity tool, but as a strategic asset that must be governed collectively rather than left to a handful of private monopolies.

STARTUP PARADISE AND THE RISE OF FRENCH UNICORNS

VivaTech likes to describe itself as "Startup Paradise", and the numbers justify the slogan. More than 14,000 startups, from early?stage ventures to unicorns and centaurs, crowded the halls, meeting over 3,600 investors from venture capital funds, corporate funds and angel networks. Pitch stages ran almost non?stop, including a Startup Challenge session with storytelling coaching led by Peter Hopwood. For founders, the event offered a rare combination: direct access to global capital, exposure to major corporate

clients, and visibility in front of policymakers who actually shape their regulatory environment.

Behind this effervescence lies a deeper transformation. In 2017, France counted barely three tech unicorns. Less than a decade later, by June 2026, the country now boasts 29, spanning AI, fintech, quantum, Defence, Greentech, health and consumer platforms. Names like Qonto (Neobanking), Mistral AI (open?source AI models), Pasqal (quantum computing), Alan (digital health insurance), Pennylane (financial SaaS), Morpho (DeFi), Sorare (NFT football), Back Market and Vestiaire Collective (circular economy), or Content square and Dataiku (data and analytics) are now familiar to investors far beyond French borders. Alongside the Good Samaritan application, nominated by the World Summit Awards and valued at around 3 billion dollars by American investors, they show that French and Europe?based innovators can attract serious global attention while remaining anchored in European norms and values.

Compared with the rest of Europe, France's strength lies less in any single flagship than in the density of its ecosystem. Germany may host industrial tech giants and the UK a historic financial centre, but France has managed to align public policy, capital and branding around a coherent narrative: that startups are not just a fashionable side story, but a core asset of national power. In global terms, the United States still dominates in absolute numbers of unicorns, yet the gap is no longer infinite; France and a handful of European peers now form a second circle of power where new champions emerge with enough scale to matter in AI, Fintech, quantum or defence.

FRENCH TECH SOVEREIGNTY: FROM LABEL TO STRATEGY

This rise did not happen by accident. Created in 2013, the Mission French Tech, a public administration attached to the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, was designed precisely to structure and support this ecosystem. Over the past decade, it has deployed the "French Tech" brand, backed high?potential startups through national programs, and coordinated a network of 125 French Tech Capitals and Communities across France and abroad. More than 60 "French Tech correspondents" embedded in key public bodies, from Bpifrance and Business France to the Treasury and other agencies help founders navigate funding, regulation and international expansion.

According to official figures, 245 startups have already been supported by these programmes, and three out of five French citizens now use at least one French tech solution every month. This combination of branding, funding, regulatory support and international projection has given France something that few European countries can claim: an explicit state strategy to turn startups into global champions. VivaTech acts as its annual showcase, where the French Tech "label" translates into concrete dealflow, partnerships and policy announcements.

MEET THE GAME?CHANGERS: A GLOBAL AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

"Meet the Game?Changers" was more than a marketing line. With 4,000 partners and 180,000 attendees from all continents, VivaTech functioned as a global agora. Corporate innovation teams, public agencies, NGOs, universities and media all used the event as a platform to showcase their projects and scout for collaborations. On the four main stages, 450 speakers took turns: tech CEOs, ministers, European commissioners, African startup founders, climate activists, AI researchers and social entrepreneurs.

One of the specificities that distinguishes VivaTech from other tech events is its insistence on inclusion and accessibility. The event is open not only to professionals but also to students, seniors, people with disabilities and under?privileged audiences. Dedicated routes, adapted signage and support staff help make the venue more accessible, and specific programs aim to bring in participants from diverse backgrounds who might otherwise be excluded from such spaces. VivaTech also positions itself as a bridge between the Global North and the Global South, particularly with African countries whose delegations' showcased solutions in fintech, agritech, healthtech and climate resilience.

FRANCE'S NEW TECH STRATEGY: BEYOND CES, BEYOND EUROPE

At ten years old, VivaTech now embodies France's broader strategy to position itself as a leading tech hub, not only in Europe but on the global stage. The comparison with CES is inevitable: while Las Vegas remains a massive marketplace for gadgets and consumer electronics, Paris increasingly presents a more political, more social and more sovereign vision of innovation. By combining

cutting?edge AI, cybersecurity and greentech showcases with debates on ethics, inclusion and global justice, France is signalling that leadership in tech will no longer be measured solely in product launches or stock market valuations. It will also be measured in the capacity to make technology serve society, to open doors rather than close them, to empower rather than exclude.

If the first ten years of VivaTech have turned Paris into Europe's main tech crossroads, the next decade will show whether France can turn this momentum into lasting economic power, digital sovereignty and a more inclusive innovation model, one that speaks as much to seniors, people with disabilities and African entrepreneurs as it does to Silicon Valley...To be continued

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Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-26936/france-outgrows-ces-by-combining-innovation-sovereignty-inclusion-with-vivatech.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): RACHDI Rahma, Jedie Foster

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619