

EAIE 2026: “Our presence at this event demonstrates a commitment to internationalization” (FU)



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“It’s crucial to be at the heart of an event of this magnitude, which is the most significant of its kind in Europe. Being present demonstrates a commitment to internationalization,” said [Carle Bonafous-Murat](#), France Universités’ permanent delegate in Brussels, to News Tank on September 10, 2026, on the sidelines of the EAIE 2026, which took place from September 8 to 11 in Glasgow (United Kingdom).

For the first time, France Universités had a booth in the France Pavilion. “We are living in an era where the internationalization of higher education and research is no longer a given. Various governments are questioning the admission of international students and the principle of international exchanges. ”

“We wanted to be there with our counterparts UUK International and the Swiss, just as they are set to rejoin the Erasmus+ program [in 2027]. It is a way to express our satisfaction and discuss the British expectations from their return. The program has changed and so has the world, how do we take that into account?”

“ Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish universities have their own unique characteristics and histories. Scottish universities, however, have interesting values and strong ties to France, through Scottish philosophers and the Enlightenment. This is a way to demonstrate our commitment to Scotland and to establish our position vis-à-vis the United Kingdom on tuition fees. ”

Finally, “it avoids multiple trips. We’re here to engage in bilateral discussions with some of our key partners today, such as those in Canada and Taiwan. It’s a perfect venue to easily discuss operationalization and major international projects.”

France Universités’ European and International Strategy

“France Universités has a shared international and European strategy, made possible by our recently expanded international relations (IR) team. There are seven of us now. A fair like this enables us to integrate the international and European components of our strategy,” says Carle Bonafous-Murat.

The association has been hosting international delegations from outside Europe for several years at its offices in Brussels and Paris. “We show them that they can both meet with French universities in Paris through B2B sessions and explore our European dimension in Brussels. When you have access to a French institution within a European alliance, you also have access to its other partners.” ”

Carle Bonafous-Murat also highlights the increased presence of European alliances at EAIE 2026. France Universités has “many partners, in the sense of counterpart conferences with which we work on a privileged basis. In addition to the British, we hold trilateral meetings

twice a year with the Germans and the Poles. We also have strong ties with the Spanish, Italians, and Dutch.”

Strategies Vary by University

“Student mobility figures vary across the three levels of the LMD system. At the bachelor’s level, mobility tends to be more open, while at the master’s and doctoral levels, it often leads to a dual degree,” explains Carle Bonafous-Murat.

The proportions also vary from one field of study to another: “Some universities have many students enrolled in the social sciences and humanities and fewer in STEM. We’re aware of the major trends, and depending on demand, we sometimes try to strengthen ties with specific partners.”

“Some universities focus on certain regions of the world. However, the choice of region depends heavily on the university and its constituent units. The Sorbonne Nouvelle, for example, includes the Institute of Advanced Studies on Latin America; ties with that region are therefore very strong, structured around research programs. This includes both a student and a researcher component.”

“It is interesting to ask which universities have an international strategy that reaches both students and researchers. How do you combine the two?”

“That’s what we’ve tried to do with the United Kingdom as part of the Sophie Germain Program: we have launched a student mobility initiative centered around research projects. Sophie Germain awardees had a small budget at their disposal that allowed them, if they wished, to send master’s or doctoral students to a British laboratory working on their chosen topic.”

Changing the Way Institutions Collaborate

Another goal of EAIE 2026 was to reshape partnerships. “For our universities, it is essential to link research, innovation, and education: this is our continuum and our mantra. The Sophie Germain program is therefore a good example of this. We are also eager to introduce French universities to new ideas that could support international partnerships,” adds the France Universités delegate.

“One area we are focusing on, although we don’t yet have specific guidelines, is micro-credits. This is a way to recognize small-scale educational experiences. For instance, a student on an internship in another European country, without staying there for months, can earn micro-credits upon their return. It is a certification, recognized by both parties, of the skills acquired during their internship-based mobility experience.”

Carle Bonafous-Murat specifically mentions sector-specific mobility programs. “I’m thinking of the battery sector, which is crucial for Europe. Automakers have an interest in getting involved, but they do not necessarily want or need this to result in a training program spanning several years, with X modules. They sometimes want people who have worked in these fields and gone abroad to be able to have their skills certified.”

“In France, the use of micro-credits is not very widespread. In Ireland, conversely, it is very well developed at the seven public universities supported by the government. They are far ahead of us on this issue.”

Internationalization at Home

Regarding internationalization at home, the delegate has mixed feelings. “All university presidents are convinced that a physical, real-world experience of mobility is necessary. But

internationalization at home can also be a way to familiarize oneself with the host country before departure.”

“It can also be beneficial for students who are unable to travel, although it must not become a default solution. We need to consider ways to enable students with disabilities to participate in mobility programs. We’re working on this and have signed partnerships with specialized organizations.”

He also emphasizes the issue of financial resources for students who wish to participate in mobility programs. “This can be a barrier.”

“France Universités participates in European projects and responds to calls for proposals with partners on this topic. One of the approved projects aimed to propose a new method to calculate the Erasmus grant. It is based on the idea that differences in the cost of living between the city of departure and the city of arrival can be considered, rather than classifying countries into broad GDP categories.”

“The United Kingdom concluded that not participating in Erasmus was more costly than participating.” ”

“The situation for British universities is what it is: economically difficult, to say the least.

With Erasmus, you don’t charge tuition fees on either side. The UK concluded that not participating in Erasmus was more costly than participating,” says Carle Bonafous-Murat.

“Today, British universities are rejoining Erasmus, but will they be interested in exchanges in more specific fields? We don’t know what their objectives are. We don’t know if there will be any form of reciprocity.”

The Issue of the English Language in French Academic Programs

The lack of English in French degree programs is often cited by English-speaking universities as a barrier to sending their students abroad. “Again, whether English is used in degree programs depends on the field. In disciplines like philosophy, it is difficult. But it is more common in scientific, medical, and STEM fields, etc.” says Carle Bonafous-Murat.

“I have seen some interesting initiatives in certain French institutions that claimed to offer an English-language class on a specific topic. Obviously, this requires having a large enough cohort to form multiple groups.”

“The French are clearly not the most ‘anglicized’ in Europe—at least not to the extent of the citizens of The Netherlands or Sweden. However, a great deal of progress has been made.”

“From my perspective as an English scholar, the question of the interaction between the English-speaking and French-speaking worlds—between English and French—arises. There are countries, such as Canada, but also continents, such as Africa, where these questions also arise.”

The “Choose France for Higher Education” Strategy

As part of the “Choose France for Higher Education” strategy, the government announced on April 21, 2026, that 80% of non-EU students will eventually be required to pay differentiated tuition fees (€2,895 for a bachelor’s degree, €3,941 for a master’s degree) compared to €178 and €254 for French and European students.

Two transitional rates are planned: 30% for exemptions granted for the 2026–2027 academic year and 25% for those granted for the 2027–2028 academic year.

When the decree was published in the Official gazette on May 20, 2026, “we told the ministry that this was not the right time. It is rushed and undermines the universities’ strategy, which,

since the introduction of differentiated tuition fees, has been based on reciprocity and, ultimately on fee waivers.”

“Many universities stated that the challenge is to be able to maintain this strategy. But, as the decree stands, there should be an adjusting executive order, yet it does not take this into account. University presidents have the authority to grant exemptions on a case-by-case basis, depending on the student’s situation, but that does not constitute an international strategy. This will be a key electoral issue.”

The Possibility of the Far Right Coming to Power in France

When asked about the possibility of the far right coming to power in 2027, Carle Bonafous-Murat stated: “The RN access to power is a possibility but let us not indulge in political fiction. We are here, particularly at the EAIE, to support an outward-looking, open, and internationalized university for the student experience, as well as to defend the idea of European sovereignty.”

“This shift taking place in certain countries where, suddenly, international students are seen as a burden seems incomprehensible to us.”

France Universités’ first response was to draft its paper “International Students, Researchers, and Faculty Members: An Underappreciated Asset,” published in September 2025.

“It states that we cannot treat international students as mere immigration statistics. The interministerial committee, which addresses the issue of international students, is not a good solution. We must not limit ourselves to that view, especially since, compared to immigration issues, the concerns regarding international students are often minimal.”

“France Universités and the organization Euraxess France, of which I am the president, give us an inside look: What are the visa issues? What about planning? How do universities handle these matters? There are people who specialize in welcoming students, researchers, and international individuals. Our paper is a way to plan ahead.”