France

Leading Europe’s green and digital revolutions

As it emerges from the most severe health and economic crisis in recent memory, France is poised to lead a new European revolution. Having already made major strides in service economy growth and digital development prior to the pandemic, France is capitalizing on the opportunities offered by the Covid-19 crisis to advance one of Europe’s most forward-thinking and ambitious development agendas.

Billions of investment is being channeled into an unprecedented economic transformation, and investors are flocking. Under the leadership of President Emmanuel Macron, France is at the forefront of the most profound transitions Europe has undergone since the end of the Cold War. The future will be digital, and it will be green. Macron swept to power in 2017 on a pro-business reform agenda, and he remains committed to transforming the French economy. Spotting the enormous opportunity the Covid-19 pandemic presents, Macron launched his ambitious France 2030 development agenda last month. This €35 billion plan aims to transform France into a world leader in nuclear and green hydrogen power production, and to help it become Europe’s top digital economy. There is no time to waste, he argued: “We must rebuild the framework for the economy of tomorrow for France and Europe. Innovation will be key amid global competition for leadership and access to raw materials. The winner takes all. We must wage the battle of innovation and industrial transformation. We need a country that produces more.”

As the world’s fifth-largest economy and Europe’s second-largest consumer market, France already occupies an important global position. Its economic fundamentals are solid; France is a major producer of aircraft, pharmaceuticals, vehicles, and agricultural products which have also pushed it to become the world’s fifth largest exporter. A strong production base is underpinned by a strategic location at the heart of Europe, excellent infrastructure, and high human capital. And as France President Emmanuel Macron pointed out at the beginning of June: “It is a country that embraces these principles. France is known for quality, which has really helped our brand, particularly in the American market.”

From biotechnology to start-ups, the French service economy – and investors have state guarantees for Bpifrance, the public actor for start-up funding. The country is already making major strides in innovation. Paris overlooks Berlin to become continental Europe’s top destination for start-up ventures standing last year, with total VC funding in France jumping by 27% year-on-year to hit $5.3 billion. With GDP growth set to hit 6.8% in 2021 and 4% in 2022, the country will benefit from a visionary strategy while continuing to play to its existing strengths, as Macron highlighted last month: “If we look at the companies that have shown they have real strengths and assets, in the face of the major challenges of the crisis. We are a complete country, present on all continents, a historical power that has historically been able to innovate. We are a country of creators, it is in our DNA.”

Séché Environnement - A pioneer of the circular economy

Global concerns about climate change have prompted a quest for protection of biodiversity and the ecological balance. This is a common goal that can be achieved with the help of technology. A clear example is European Circular Economy, which serves as an example of how we can achieve a sustainable future. It is imperative that we find solutions to address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. France is one of the countries that is leading the way in this direction.

The country has been known for its innovation and commitment to sustainability. This is exemplified in the work of Séché Environnement, a company that has made significant contributions to the circular economy. The company has been recognized for its innovative approach to waste management and environmental protection.

Given the importance of decarbonization and biodiversity, it is crucial that we work towards a sustainable future. The circular economy is a key component of this vision. Séché Environnement has taken the lead in promoting this approach and has made significant progress in delivering on its goals. It has established a reputation as a trusted partner, and its work continues to inspire others to follow its example.

Séché Environnement has been at the forefront of the circular economy movement, with a focus on waste management and renewable energy. The company has made significant investments in research and development, and it has successfully implemented innovative solutions for waste management.

Séché Environnement has also demonstrated its commitment to sustainability through its partnerships and collaborations. The company has partnered with other leading organizations to promote the circular economy and has been involved in numerous initiatives that aim to address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

In summary, Séché Environnement is a leader in the field of the circular economy, with a proven track record of innovation and commitment to sustainability. Its work serves as an inspiration for others to follow its example and join the push towards a sustainable future.
Schmidt Groupe: Industrial artisans with a global sustainable reach

For nearly 90 years, Schmidt Group has been setting the standards for kitchen retailers and manufacturers. It has recorded uninterrupted growth since 1934 because of its sharp focus on choice, trust, and sustainability - as well as its high-quality products. These values have carried it through some of the most tumultuous decades of human history, with the group growing from a simple masonry business launched by Hubert Schmidt in Saarland, to become a world leader in kitchen manufacturing and retailing. This is not a B2B company, as CEO Anne Leitzgen explained, it’s H2H - human to human - because of the way in which Schmidt works with thousands of clients, many of whom are independent retailers.

“We decide together with the retailers on what model to produce tomorrow, what kind of sustainability we should pursue, exploring all avenues for cooperation. This is the kind of sustainable joint ventures like the one it has in China, which has been so successful that the Chinese market now accounts for 10% of its turnover. Schmidt is already one of France’s top exporters; next up it wants to become a truly global manufacturer and exporter, said Leitzgen.

Looking to the future, Leitzgen is seeking to further diversify the group’s operations, by diversifying its partnerships and exploring all avenues for cooperation. This opens new joint ventures like the one it has in China, which has been so successful that the Chinese market now accounts for 10% of company turnover. Schmidt is already one of France’s top exporters; next up it wants to become a truly global manufacturer with a larger international footprint.

“The group has a very special know-how and record in production, in how we manage data from the manufacture and industry and in how we deliver the product. I believe it could be interesting to have joint ventures from 2006, and it has been an early adopter of sustainable business practices since the group received ISO-50001 certification from the Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification, and it has been an early adopter of sustainable business practices. In 2015, it received the ISO-50001 certification for clean energy management, and today it is the only company of its kind holding all six ISO certifications. In 2016, the group was awarded the Responsible Supplier Relations label, which is granted by the French government to domestic companies in recognition of the sustainable and balanced relations they have with their suppliers. But it’s not just awards and certificates; Schmidt truly believes in walking the talk. All of its timber comes from controlled sources, company investments that cut energy consumption are fast-tracked, and the group uses responsible, recyclable materials wherever possible.

“For us, sustainability is a very important point. It will be a very important way of doing business in the future. We have to have good trained people and we have to respect them. Sustainability is a great business for tomorrow, and employees are very happy to be involved,” said Leitzgen.

Today, the group is exploring all avenues for cooperation. This opens new joint ventures like the one it has in China, which has been so successful that the Chinese market now accounts for 10% of company turnover. Schmidt is already one of France’s top exporters; next up it wants to become a truly global manufacturer with a larger international footprint.

“We have a very special know-how and record in production, in how we manage data from the manufacture and industry and in how we deliver the product. I believe it could be interesting to have joint ventures from 2006, and it has been an early adopter of sustainable business practices. In 2015, it received the ISO-50001 certification for clean energy management, and today it is the only company of its kind holding all six ISO certifications. In 2016, the group was awarded the Responsible Supplier Relations label, which is granted by the French government to domestic companies in recognition of the sustainable and balanced relations they have with their suppliers. But it’s not just awards and certificates; Schmidt truly believes in walking the talk. All of its timber comes from controlled sources, company investments that cut energy consumption are fast-tracked, and the group uses responsible, recyclable materials wherever possible.

“For us, sustainability is a very important point. It will be a very important way of doing business in the future. We have to have good trained people and we have to respect them. Sustainability is a great business for tomorrow, and employees are very happy to be involved,” said Leitzgen.
Econocom International BV
Helping European companies pursue digital transformation

F rance's economy is back on track and is expected to grow by 6.3% in 2021, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At the same time, the country is channeling resources into new technologies and digital transformation. In March, French president Emmanuel Macron outlined a five-year, €300bn investment plan that would help to boost the country’s high-tech industries.

This has benefited digital software providers, who were already seeing a boost from pandemic-related business needs. “We’re a general digital contractor and have seen growth in digital and cloud,” says Jean-Louis Bouchard, chairman and chief executive of Econocom International BV, a Belgium company strongly present in France. "As we finance and facilitate the digital transformation of large firms and public organizations, Bouchard started the group back in 1973, and since then it has expanded rapidly. "Econocom now has 950 employees, and is the only European contractor to cover all trades, from digital, telecoms and finance. The company has revenue of €250m, €220m of which is France-based around €5 billion over the next three years.

Bouchard says that pandemic has had a big impact, but from a business perspective it has been mostly positive for Econocom, with many companies forced to contend with large-scale remote working. “There was a real boost to the whole industry. There's a large volume for equipment, large demand for support and we have a large demand for financing too,” he says.

More than ever, customers need help to handle their digital equipment, choose hardware and software, implement their systems, and finance and keep them running. “And then they need people to refurbish it and give it a second or third life,” Bouchard says. From the beginning Econocom has been a strong proponent of the circular economy, with CSR a key part of its DNA.

The Group has also been listed on the Brussels stock exchange since 1986, but Bouchard says that his now considering divesting, in order to be less beholden to short-term stockholder needs. “Often the next three months are not that important, you're looking much further,” he says, highlighting a significant, 10-year contract they signed with the French navy earlier this year.

Econocom is also very supportive of the image of France as a business hub. “I love my country and I think we're very lucky. I love my country and I think we have an insurance industry, and a health system,” says Bouchard. “We’re also much more than just France. In 50 years, there’s been a big change. We’ve crossed a number of countries, which gives us an advantage to understand our neighbors.”

Linedata - Driving digital transformation of financial services

D igital transformation continues to accelerate across all industries, and financial services are no different. According to a new report by Linedata, a French financial software and data analytics company, global digital transformation is valued at $24.6 billion today, up from just $2.3 billion annually until 2030, while the global enterprise software market is now worth a whopping $227.7 billion, and expected to grow by more than 7% annually until 2026. Linedata, a leading French software and data analytics firm, is ready to expand its global footprint.

Founded in 1998, Linedata is a multi-faced group of providers of distinct software, valuable data analytics, and services ranging from hosting to consulting. According to founder and CEO Anvarily Avaria, the company is trusted by top financial services companies and has a long track record of success because of its core focus on three areas: strong client relations, accelerated innovation, and new product offerings.

This has kept it profitable, sustainable and innovative during a period of rapid technological transformation, he explained. “When I started the company over 20 years ago, my goal was to be global, independent and sustainable. This is still true. We are operating in 50 countries, and we still have more to do in Asia, Africa and Americas. Sustainability and independence are connected: with solid financials, you can invest in long-term plans. With independence, you enable sustainable growth.”

T he third biggest economy in Europe and the seventh biggest globally, according to the International Monetary Fund, France is a global economic leader. For centuries one of the globe’s wealthiest markets and leading trading partners, the Western European country continues to lead the world in international investment. Technology and research are core values in the world’s fourth-largest building and civil engineering industry, while the country’s health care is a major area of focus, fitting with the company’s ethos and global trends. SERFIM is an active member and enabler of this and putting forward stronger environmental transformation with its own companies, and for politicians to take stronger action on climate change.

Established in 1875, family-run SERFIM Group has the experience and resources for significant growth. While expanding in France and internationally, SERFIM has remained grounded in its long-standing values and identity as an independent, family-led company.

“We are proud of our independence, which allows us to prioritise value and human capital over purely financial growth," says chairman Guy Mathisien. The company is business as usual. We respect our people and our customers, and the people that work for us, and our values and clients and we are innovating with leading technology, "Mathisien continues.

"France is a pioneer in sustainable infrastructure," says Alexandra Mathiolon. “Here at SERFIM we are proud to be part of this, putting the environment at the heart of our business.”