

Rebuilding bridges: François Bitouzet, VivaTech, and the British pavilion

Ahead of Viva Technology 2024, organised from the 22nd to the 25th of May in Paris, Paul Ferretti spoke to François Bitouzet, Managing Director of Viva Technology, about the British pavilion, European tech and the bridges between France and the UK.

Temps de lecture : minute

21 May 2024

Are you looking forward to this 2024 edition of Viva Technology?

"Definitely! I think there is a very good dynamic around VivaTech, which is still a young event, since it was created in 2016. The 2023 edition, with for example the presence of Elon Musk, showed the interest from the world regarding Europe. Secondly, we now live to the rhythm of tech and digital. We are living a very exciting moment, as we are witnessing the promises and the challenges of artificial intelligence (AI)."

"We are living a paramount moment that generates ideas and discussions around innovation. As VivaTech has become one of the great platforms to address these topics, people are all the more inclined to come and see us."

What is the place of the British tech on both

the European and international scene?

"In terms of European issues, what's interesting is that at VivaTech, what we're trying to show is that there isn't a single model issue, disputed between China and the USA. What we're trying to show at VivaTech is that there are a lot of models around tech and digital in Europe, Japan, India or Africa."

"There is no fatality and I think that it is something that is very specific to VivaTech. For example, this year we will have 120 countries, there will be 40 national pavilions, with many countries telling us that they like to come to VivaTech because it's a little bit like the United Nations. We want everyone to be around the table so all models can express themselves. And then people do their thing, they agree or disagree, and that, I think, is something that is ultimately very European and that also creates the tone, the specificity of VivaTech."

"Regarding the link between the UK and France, I think that there are many economic, political and cultural links between the two countries. Sometimes our people like to argue, but there are a lot of common shared values. This week, we celebrated the anniversary of the Channel Tunnel. There is also a geographical proximity that makes things a lot easier. I think that with Brexit there has been a certain break between the UK and Europe, and that's normal, for that was the challenge of Brexit."

Today, the bridges between France and the UK are being rebuilt.

"This year, we are very happy, for the first time at VivaTech, to have a British pavilion. For British investors and companies, France has become the gateway to Europe, and we have also seen, following Brexit, that

there are a number of activities that were in London that have switched back to the continent and particularly to France. And I think that for the French, England is obviously also an entrance to the Anglo-Saxon world, including the United States. Our 2 countries are open doors to larger and larger markets. Hence this very, very vibrant activity between the 2 countries, especially in tech and digital."

"The British pavilion is there to talk about the link with France, but it is above all there to show all the richness of the British ecosystem and try to continue to connect it to Europe. As mentioned before, more than 120 countries will be gathered at VivaTech, representing all continents."



Read also

The Audacious Kingdom set to shine at VivaTech, France's premier trade show

