



FRANCO-BRITISH **BUSINESS CONFERENCE** 2025

Highlights

18 September 2025
at Societe Generale, Canary Wharf

Organised by



**FRENCH CHAMBER
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

Established in 1883



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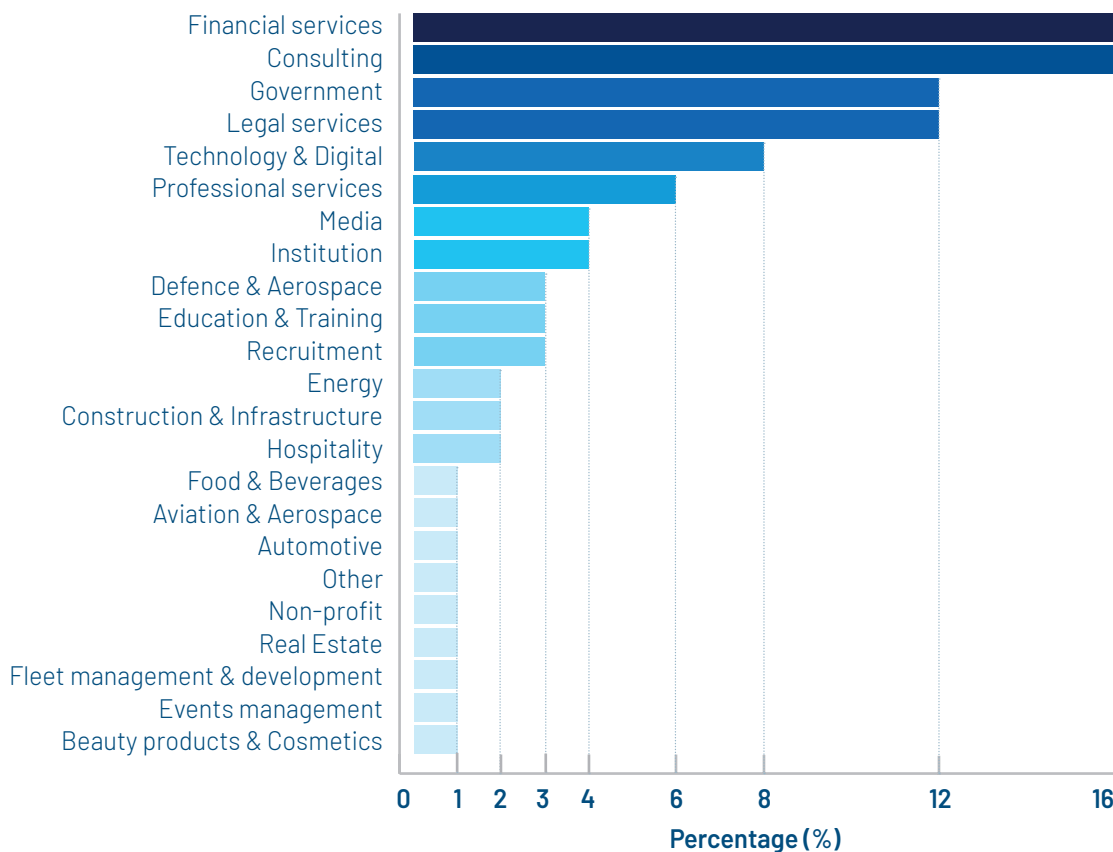
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Our Conference at a Glance

The Franco-British Business Conference 2025 brought together **191 participants** from over **100 companies** and **21 high-level speakers**, creating a unique platform that connected government representatives and senior business decision-makers.

With nearly **40% of attendees at Director level or above** and over **10% from government**, the event ensured dialogue at the intersection of policy and business leadership.

Sectoral Make-Up of Participants: A diverse audience spanning 20+ industries



Seniority of Participants: A senior audience with **Directors, Executives**, and **Government officials** representing nearly half of attendees, alongside strong managerial and professional representation



Opening Sequences: Setting the Scene

The Power of Trade: France is the UK's 4th largest trading partner, and the UK is France's 6th, with bilateral trade exceeding £104 billion. The announcement of £1 billion in new French investment in the UK, creating thousands of jobs in the UK, further showcases the importance of the bilateral trade relationship in promoting growth and prosperity on both sides of the Channel.

Challenges and Optimism: While a quarter of businesses in the UK are impacted by economic uncertainty, nearly half remain confident in the business environment, with 70% optimistic about their growth prospects according to our Impact Survey.

A New Era of Cooperation: The recent UK-France Summit confirmed a deepening bilateral cooperation on multiple levels, from the Industrial Strategy Partnership – committing the two countries to increased collaboration on frontier industries to promote growth and innovation – to the “Lancaster House 2.0” agreements aimed at rebooting and modernising bilateral defence collaboration.



Key Takeaways

From Jacques Pommeraud's Interview

In a candid interview with **Peter Vanham**, Editorial Director of Leadership at Fortune, **Jacques Pommeraud**, Group CEO & Chairman at Inetum, offered a clear-eyed perspective on the challenges facing European tech – and the urgent need for a fundamental shift in mindset.



The Scale-Up

Challenge: Despite Europe having leaders in AI infrastructure, it lags significantly behind the US in developing large language models. The US launched over 10 times more LLMs than Europe last year.

The Three “Miracles” for European Tech:

To catch up, Europe needs to mobilise more capital (the UK raised 3x more venture capital than France in 2023), offer better incentives for founders and talent, and create a truly unified single market to reduce barriers to scaling.

Regulation vs.

Innovation: Europe tends to “regulate before innovating.” The EU AI Act, with its potential for significant fines and high compliance costs, could deter small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from adopting AI.

Mindset Matters:

Beyond funding and regulation, a cultural shift towards optimism and a greater tolerance for experimentation is essential to fostering innovation and unlocking the full potential of AI in Europe.

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Defence and Economic Security

This panel highlighted the unique and essential defence bond between France and the UK and its role in addressing common threats.

PANEL SPEAKERS

Phil Siveter
Thales UK
PANELLIST

Oriel Petry
Airbus UK
PANELLIST

Nick Earl
Safran Helicopter
Engines UK
PANELLIST

Calvin Bailey
Leyton and Wanstead
MODERATOR

Julien Lalanne de Saint-Quentin
Defence Investment Specialist
PANELLIST



Europe's Most Powerful Alliance:

The Franco-British defence partnership is Europe's most powerful military alliance, anchored in geography, nuclear deterrence, and shared global responsibilities.

Beyond Budgets: While fiscal constraints exist, cooperation helps maximise resources. Shared doctrine, practical procurement reforms, and industry collaboration are just as important as budgets for turning strategy into operational capability.

A Window of Opportunity: The renewal of the Lancaster House agreements offers a unique opportunity for joint capability development in future cruise and anti-ship weapons, as well as combined expeditionary forces.

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Technology, AI and Digital Collaboration

This panel explored the Franco-British approach to technology and AI, highlighting both shared ambitions and divergent regulatory paths.

PANEL SPEAKERS

Jeremy Kahn
Fortune
MODERATOR

Dr. Benjamin Guedj
Inria and UCL
PANELLIST

Diane Mullenex
Pinsent Masons
PANELLIST

Imran Shafi OBE
Nscale
PANELLIST

Wiem Gharbi
Ankar AI
PANELLIST



Divergent Paths, Shared Goals:

The UK's light-touch AI regime and the EU's more prescriptive AI Act have different approaches to regulation, but both countries share the same ambition to be global leaders in AI innovation.

The Call for Collaboration:

To compete with the US and China, Europe needs scalability. Franco-British cooperation on visas, talent mobility, shared infrastructure, and joint support is essential to reduce compliance costs especially for startups.

Sovereignty and Innovation:

While the quest for national industrial champions remains a priority, long-term progress relies on cross-border research, shared energy infrastructure for AI, and long-term investment in skills.

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Pinsent Masons

Energy and Climate Transition

Discussions on this panel focused on the vital role of the Franco-British partnership in achieving net-zero targets and ensuring energy resilience.

PANEL SPEAKERS

Gregory Lebourg
OVHcloud
PANELLIST

Allan Baker
Societe Generale
PANELLIST

Florence Verzelen
Dassault Systèmes
PANELLIST

Harriet Wallace
Imperial College
MODERATOR

Tanguy Robert
Sami
PANELLIST

Piers Forster
Professor
PANELLIST



A Tangible Partnership:

France already exports low-carbon electricity to the UK, demonstrating a strong, tangible energy partnership that helps reduce emissions and enhance resilience. However, collaboration across government, academia, and industry remains critical to achieving net zero goals while remaining competitive.

Nuclear and

Renewables: Both countries see nuclear power and renewables as central to Europe's decarbonization. However, success hinges on modernising grid infrastructure and accelerating electrification across transport, heating, and industry.

Business as a Catalyst:

Long-term regulatory consistency and financial incentives are crucial to unlock private investment and drive innovation. Mid-sized firms, in particular, need stronger support to manage their energy transition.

Capitalising on energy

efficiency: Unlocking energy efficiency as a "hidden fuel" requires digitalisation, process optimisation and circularity to reduce costs and emissions.

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Save the date and register today for the next
Franco-British Business Conference on
10 June 2026



**FRENCH CHAMBER
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

Established in 1883

We invite you to engage with the Chamber's broader advocacy work,
so that together we can shape the Franco-British business environment
with your voice at the centre. For more information, contact:

David Lutton
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
dlutton@ccfgeb.co.uk

Cécilia Pennetier
EXTERNAL RELATIONS & POLICY OFFICER
cpennetier@ccfgeb.co.uk

FRENCH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN GREAT BRITAIN
Becket House, 1 Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7EU
ccfgeb.co.uk