

French Leaders at the World Economic Forum 2026

A Comprehensive Report on AI and Technology Participation

Report Date: January 20, 2026

Location: Davos, Switzerland

Forum Dates: January 19-23, 2026

Executive Summary

The 56th World Economic Forum in Davos 2026 marks a significant showcase for French innovation, technology leadership, and political influence. President Emmanuel Macron is leading the most substantial French delegation ever sent to the annual gathering, with a carefully curated selection of 23 companies spanning artificial intelligence, deeptech, quantum computing, space technology, and cleantech sectors[1]. This strategic deployment reflects France's positioning as a key European technology hub and comes as the nation prepares to assume the G7 Presidency, emphasizing Franco-German cooperation in AI and quantum computing, and reinforcing EU competitiveness[2]. Notably, Arthur Mensch, co-founder of France's only decacorn Mistral AI, is attending independently, reinforcing France's prominence in the global AI landscape alongside American and Chinese competitors.

Political Leadership

President Emmanuel Macron

Emmanuel Macron is attending Davos as one of 64 heads of state and government registered for the 2026 forum[3]. The French President will use the platform to present his strategic vision on major economic and geopolitical challenges, with emphasis on French territorial attractiveness and innovation ecosystem strength. Macron's participation continues a consistent pattern of engagement at Davos, previously attending in 2018 and 2024[4].

Key Objectives:

- Strengthen Franco-German cooperation in AI and quantum technologies
- Reinforce European competitive positioning against American and Chinese technology dominance
- Promote France's innovation ecosystem ahead of the nation's G7 Presidency
- Network with global business leaders, investors, and policymakers

French Government Delegation

Macron is accompanied by representatives from the French government, demonstrating the political importance assigned to the forum. The preparation meeting held at the Élysée Palace on January 16, 2026, included ministers, CAC 40 executives, SBF 120 companies, and French Tech ecosystem representatives, underlining the coordinated nature of France's diplomatic and economic strategy[5].

French Artificial Intelligence Leaders

Mistral AI – Arthur Mensch

Company Profile: France's most valuable startup (decacorn status achieved)

Founder/CEO: Arthur Mensch

Focus: Generative AI models as direct competitor to OpenAI

Arthur Mensch, co-founder of Mistral AI, is attending Davos outside the official presidential delegation, consistent with his presence at the 2025 forum[6]. As the leading representative of French AI innovation, Mensch will participate in a panel discussion focused on Europe's place in the global technology landscape, joining senior European political leaders including Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, and Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković[7]. Additionally, Marguerite Bérard, a French executive heading operations at Dutch bank ABN Amro, will participate on the same panel.

Strategic Significance: Mistral AI's presence at Davos represents France's most advanced competitive position in generative AI. The company's rapid rise from founding to decacorn status in under a year demonstrates the strength of France's AI talent base and innovation capacity[8].

H Company

Focus: Agentic AI specialization

Leader: Gauthier Cloix

Sector: Artificial Intelligence

H Company is included in the official French Tech delegation to Davos, representing France's emerging capabilities in autonomous agent development. Gauthier Cloix will represent the company at the forum[9].

Bioptimus

Focus: Artificial Intelligence applied to biological sciences

Sector: AI + Life Sciences

Bioptimus is positioned within the AI segment of the French delegation, representing the emerging convergence of machine learning and biotechnology applications[9].

Safran.AI

Parent Company: Safran Group (French aerospace and defense leader)

Focus: Artificial Intelligence for aerospace and defense applications

Sector: Defense Tech + AI

[Safran.AI](#), the recently established AI subsidiary of Safran Group, brings defense-sector AI expertise to Davos, representing France's strategic commitment to integrating AI across critical industrial sectors including aeronautics and defense[10].

Supporting AI Companies

Riot Security and [Sekoia.io](#) represent France's cybersecurity-focused AI innovation, addressing the critical intersection of artificial intelligence and information security[11].

Pigment (specializing in financial planning AI) and **Qonto** (AI-enhanced banking services) represent the application of AI across enterprise software and fintech sectors, with leaders Éléonore Crespo and Alexandre Prot attending respectively[12].

KonbOione develops artificial intelligence solutions specifically for road transport logistics and optimization[13].

Quantum Computing Leadership

Quandela

Focus: Quantum computing technology

Leader: Niccolò Somaschi

Strategic Importance: European quantum sovereignty

Quandela is flagged as a critical component of the French delegation, positioned within strategic sectors central to European technological autonomy[14]. Niccolò Somaschi will represent the company. The emphasis on quantum computing reflects recognition that this technology represents a frontier for European competitive positioning, particularly as the U.S. and China advance quantum capabilities.

Strategic Context: The inclusion of Quandela underscores the Franco-German cooperation objective announced by President Macron, positioning France and Germany as joint leaders in quantum technology development within Europe[15].

Quobly

Focus: Quantum computing applications

Leader: Maud Vinet

Sector: Quantum Technology

Quobly complements Quandela's presence, representing the broader French quantum ecosystem and its commitment to quantum-related research and commercialization[16].

Deeptech and Advanced Manufacturing

Exotrail

Focus: In-space manufacturing and satellite propulsion

Sector: New Space/Advanced Manufacturing

Exotrail is part of the strategic deeptech delegation representing France's ambitions in space technology innovation[17].

Aldoria

Focus: Space technology and satellite systems

Sector: New Space

Aldoria contributes to France's presence in the new space economy, a recognized growth sector for European technological sovereignty[17].

The Exploration Company

Focus: Space technology and exploration

Sector: New Space

Representing France's commercial space ambitions alongside established space actors[18].

Eutelsat

Focus: Satellite operations and space infrastructure

Status: Established operator (not a startup)

Eutelsat's presence brings established space infrastructure expertise to the delegation, bridging startup innovation and operational scale[19].

Advanced Robotics and Automation

Exotec

Focus: Autonomous robotics for warehouse automation

Leader: Romain Moulin

Sector: Robotics + Industrial Automation

Exotec represents France's capabilities in advanced automation and robotics, addressing warehouse logistics through autonomous systems. Romain Moulin will represent the company at Davos[20].

Pelico

Focus: Manufacturing orchestration and AI-enabled factory optimization

Sector: Industrial AI + Manufacturing

Pelico's platform addresses manufacturing resilience and agility through AI-powered orchestration, representing the application of artificial intelligence to industrial base strengthening[21].

Battery Technology and Cleantech

Verkor

Focus: Electric vehicle batteries and battery manufacturing

Leader: Benoît Lemaignan

Sector: Cleantech + Strategic Supply Chains

Verkor represents France's commitment to controlling critical supply chains for EV battery production, directly supporting European automotive independence and the green transition[22]. Benoît Lemaignan will represent the company.

Dioxycle

Focus: Deep-tech industrial recycling and circular economy

Sector: Advanced Recycling + Sustainability

Dioxycle applies advanced technologies to industrial waste streams, representing France's approach to combining innovation with sustainability imperatives[23].

Sweetch Energy

Focus: Osmotic energy technology

Sector: Alternative Energy + Renewables

Sweetch Energy develops osmotic energy generation, positioning France in emerging renewable energy technologies[24].

Axon Cable, CARESTER, Sèché Environnement

These additional cleantech representatives support France's broader environmental technology positioning[25].

Financial Technology and Enterprise Software

Pigment

Focus: AI-powered financial planning and forecasting

Leader: Éléonore Crespo

Sector: Enterprise Software + FinTech

Pigment brings advanced financial planning capabilities to enterprise clients globally, representing French capabilities in enterprise software innovation[26].

Qonto

Focus: Digital banking and business financial services

Leader: Alexandre Prot

Sector: FinTech + Banking Services

Qonto has emerged as a scaled European fintech player, representing France's success in building globally-recognized banking infrastructure[27].

Ledger

Focus: Cryptocurrency security and blockchain infrastructure

Sector: Digital Asset Security

Ledger represents France's presence in blockchain and digital asset security technology, a sector of growing strategic importance[28].

Leadership and Organization

Julie Huguet – Director of the French Tech Mission

Julie Huguet, Director of the Mission French Tech, is accompanying the delegation, providing coordination and strategic guidance for the French Tech ecosystem's participation[29]. Her role involves facilitating connections between startups and the international investor, political, and corporate leadership present at Davos.

Business France Leadership

Pascal Cagni, Ambassador for International Investment and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Business France, leads the Business France delegation presence and coordinates the overall French technology ecosystem engagement[30]. Business France is organizing three thematic high-level lunches:

1. **January 20 – Artificial Intelligence & Deeptech** – Focused on advanced technologies and their commercial applications
 2. Additional thematic sessions addressing strategic priorities
 3. The "**Soirée France**" (French Evening) event gathering approximately 120 participants including business leaders, investors, and institutional representatives
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Strategic Themes and Focus Areas

Franco-German AI and Quantum Cooperation

A central strategic objective for the French delegation is strengthening Franco-German cooperation in artificial intelligence and quantum computing technologies. This theme appears across multiple Davos sessions and reflects the EU's broader strategy to develop technological autonomy from American dominance[31].

European Competitiveness and Sovereignty

France's 2026 presentation emphasizes:

- **Tech sovereignty:** Reducing European dependence on American and Chinese technologies
- **Strategic industries:** Securing supply chains in batteries, space technology, semiconductors
- **Innovation ecosystem:** Demonstrating France's role as a European innovation hub with 18,000+ startups and 450,000 direct technology sector jobs[32]

Geopolitical Context

Davos 2026 occurs during a period of heightened international tensions. France's delegation positioning emphasizes:

- European unity and cooperation
 - Technological self-sufficiency amid U.S.-China strategic competition
 - The EU's response to American technology dominance and Chinese innovations (particularly DeepSeek's advances in generative AI)[33]
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Global AI Landscape Context

American Technology Dominance

The 2026 Davos forum features unprecedented American participation, with President Donald Trump attending and leading a large delegation. Key American AI and technology leaders present include:

- **Jensen Huang** (NVIDIA CEO)
- **Satya Nadella** (Microsoft CEO)
- **Sarah Friar** (OpenAI)
- **Dario Amodei** (Anthropic)
- **Demis Hassabis** (Google DeepMind CEO)
- **Alex Karp** (Palantir Technologies)

This concentration of American AI leadership, combined with Trump's focus on American technological and economic power, frames the competitive context for European participants[34].

Chinese Competition

China's state AI company DeepSeek has recently demonstrated competitive capabilities in generative AI, challenging the American monopoly previously held by OpenAI and similar companies. This development adds urgency to European AI strategy discussions[35].

French Competitive Position

Within this competitive environment, Mistral AI represents France's most advanced position in generative AI development, positioning the nation as a secondary player behind the United States but ahead of most other European competitors[36].

Davos Program and Expected Impact

High-Level Networking

Beyond formal presentations, Davos serves as an exclusive networking platform where French startup founders and executives will access:

- International investors and venture capital partners
- Senior government officials and heads of state
- Corporate executives from global Fortune 500 companies
- Business and technology media attention

Strategic Outcomes

The French delegation will use Davos to:

- Signal European technological ambition to global markets
- Establish partnerships and alliances between French companies and international counterparts
- Position French AI and deeptech companies for international funding rounds
- Influence European Union policy discussions on technology regulation and sovereignty
- Demonstrate French attractiveness as an innovation hub for international talent and capital

Long-term Influence

As noted in strategic analysis of the forum, Davos represents more than immediate business transactions. It functions as a platform for detecting "weak signals" in economics, politics, and technology that will shape the coming years. French participation aims to position the nation's technology ecosystem as a central player in these emerging trends[37].

Conclusion

The 56th World Economic Forum in Davos 2026 represents a significant opportunity for France to assert its position as a leading European technology and innovation power. Under President Macron's leadership, a carefully curated delegation spanning artificial intelligence, quantum computing, space technology, robotics, battery innovation, and financial technology is engaging with global leaders at a moment of heightened geopolitical competition and rapid technological change.

The presence of Arthur Mensch and Mistral AI alongside government leaders reinforces France's emergence as a credible player in the critical AI sector. The broader delegation composition—spanning 23 companies across multiple strategic domains—demonstrates that French technological strength extends beyond AI to encompass the full range of emerging technologies deemed essential for European sovereignty and competitiveness.

As Europe confronts both American technological dominance and Chinese competitive advances, the French delegation's messaging emphasizes European innovation capacity, strategic partnership between member states (particularly Franco-German cooperation), and the attractiveness of France's innovation ecosystem. Whether this positioning translates into tangible outcomes—investment capital, strategic partnerships, policy influence—will depend on the effectiveness of bilateral meetings, panel discussions, and networking occurring throughout the week of January 19-23, 2026.

The forum ultimately serves as a test of France's ability to leverage its technology ecosystem, political influence, and innovation talent to shape the global technology landscape during a critical inflection point in AI development and European technological strategy[38].

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