

PRESS RELEASE

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Our international students need visas: urgent plea from the ParisTech schools

Paris, 9 June 2020 - On average, international students account for 30% of the student body of the ParisTech schools. Hailing from Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia and Russia, they join the schools as second-year students, having undergone a rigorous selection process. These students learn French before coming to France and are eager to get here and put what they've learned into practice. Each year, students from all over Europe, Asia, Africa and America also come to Paris on the bilateral exchange programmes run by the schools.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the ParisTech schools are hard at work preparing for the new academic year, with the first semester due to start in late August/early September as planned. Staff are doing their utmost to ensure that each school is ready to welcome students in the best possible conditions and in line with the latest health and safety guidelines from the government.

During the second semester of the 2019-2020 academic year, the schools rapidly adapted to new ways of working so that teaching and learning could continue despite lockdown. Live lectures and seminars, pre-recorded classes, online platforms, remote support... blended learning quickly became the new normal. And all of that is going to prove useful as things move forward too. Staff will continue to make use of these new methods and technologies when the schools re-open so that any students who cannot physically attend classes can still access all of the relevant materials and teaching content.

The schools are of course especially conscious of the need to support their international students in this respect, as many of them will be unable to get to France in time for the start of term due to the current travel restrictions and the suspension of visa services. These young people have chosen to pursue their studies in France, motivated by the chance to develop their language skills in an immersive environment. Preparations are therefore underway to allow French language classes to run remotely in order to accommodate those who have had to remain overseas. Students will be able to attend the sessions either from home or via their university. This set-up will be maintained for as long as is necessary, whether that's a few weeks or a few months, but the schools are ready to welcome their students in person just as soon as they can obtain a visa.

It is therefore now imperative that the French authorities do all they can to help get these students to France. This means working with institutions in the students' home countries so that visas can be issued in time for the new academic year. The students all have an excellent academic record and the majority have already obtained funding from either the French government, their own government or a corporate sponsor. They have made the effort to learn our language in order to come and train as engineers in our country. These are the people who will help us achieve our goal of promoting the French engineering education system as a model of excellence – our future ambassadors. It is thus

absolutely vital that they can immerse themselves in French culture as soon as possible and experience all that student life offers at the same time as their French classmates: the chance to make connections, to participate in extra-curricular activities, to meet the schools' industrial partners and so on.

Many international graduates from the ParisTech schools go on to contribute to the economic development of our country. Some remain in France, helping to boost the growth of French companies. Others choose to return to their home country to work for French businesses that are seeking to increase their production capacity or export volumes. The companies benefit from the experience and bicultural knowledge of their highly-qualified new recruits, who are perfectly equipped to tackle ambitious projects.

These future engineers have the potential to enhance the attractiveness of the French higher education system, the French economy, and France in general.

We must not let them down!

About ParisTech: www.paristech.fr

ParisTech is an alliance of top French graduate engineering schools that have been working together for over 20 years to develop joint training, research and innovation projects in the fields of science and technology. The members of the network are AgroParisTech, Arts & Métiers, Chimie ParisTech - PSL, the Ecole des Ponts ParisTech, ESPCI Paris - PSL, the Institut d'Optique Graduate School and MINES ParisTech - PSL.