

GETTING TOGETHER to talk digitalisation

Digitalisation is everywhere. On 6 June, 130 French Foreign Trade Advisors from all around North Asia met in Hong Kong to discuss how digitalisation is impacting businesses in the region.



6 June: French Foreign Trade Advisors from the North Asia region gather at the Grand Hyatt, Hong Kong.

Do you know what two French External Trade Advisers ('CCE' for the insiders) talk about when they meet each other?

You would have found out had you been at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong on 6 June; 130 of us belonging to the North Asia region (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan), along with guests from other sections in Asia and Europe, gathered to brainstorm on the topic of digital transformation and its impact on our businesses and on North Asian markets.

With the support of the French Embassy in China and the Consulate General of Hong Kong, and thanks to the thorough and efficient organisation, the meeting turned out to be a great opportunity, not only for the attendants to mingle, but, more importantly, to catch the latest trends and some business innovations in the fields of digitalisation.

We acknowledged that this evolution encompasses as many threats as opportunities, and that, among all countries, China is neck and neck with the US and could be seen as a laboratory of the future for both digital consumption and production.

We came across many new concepts and focused on the new empowerment of consumers made possible by the era of digitalisation, as well as the changes imposed by such a digital disruption on the inner organisation of companies.

Lessons to be learnt

There's no magic recipe, but nonetheless we left with a common compelling message: stay in tune as much as possible, and be rest assured that we are only at the beginning of this business revolution which will sweep away conservative companies not eager to follow the innovation path. We can share the conviction, as well, that French companies are for the most part trend-setters and ahead of the crowd, even if it is sometimes easier to thrive or get funded abroad than at home.

Indeed, the meeting was also the opportunity to recall the difficulties for French startups in receiving proper funding and support. Equally, we were reminded of the necessity for French Public Authorities to be selective in their support and wary of those carrying technological breakthroughs. The testimony of Eblink's founding partners, who developed a breakthrough technology in the field of energy which they cannot nurture in France alone, was a good example of this.

We had just one regret: so much to share for so little time!

So, when's the next one? **E**