

FICAHT 2026

Report

A Franco-Irish reflection on Skills for tomorrow's Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Tourism Sectors

16-17 June 2026

Dublin

Summary

The Franco-Irish Forum for Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Tourism (FICAHT) 2026, organized by the French Embassy in Ireland and hosted by the City of Dublin FET College, provided a platform for structured dialogue on the future of culinary arts, hospitality and tourism education and training. **During two days, more than 60 French and Irish institutional representatives, teachers, students explored through discussions, networking and site visits the future of the culinary arts, hospitality and tourism sectors, their competitiveness, attractiveness and sustainability.** For a second time, the Forum also featured a tourism competition to broaden participation by including students from French vocational schools. **15 representatives from French vocational schools and academic regions, 6 Education and Training Boards, and 3 technological universities (MTU, SETU, and TU Dublin), as well as academic partners (Higher Education Authority, Failte Ireland, the Irish Hotel Federation on the Irish side, and Campus France and Atout France on the French side) attended the event.**

Dr Christy Duffy, Chief Executive of City of Dublin FET College, opened the forum and the French Ambassador Place stressed how the FICAHT network demonstrates the value of Franco-Irish and European cooperation. The general bilateral collaboration between France and Ireland was structured and fostered over the last ten years, which led to concrete partnerships and mobilities. In the context of the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union for Ireland, the Ambassador highlighted the European Commission “Food 2030” framework and the *From Farm to Fork Strategy* which are key sustainability frames.

The panel discussions allowed institutional representatives, teachers and students to exchange best practices, ignite debate and evaluate the challenges faced by the sectors by offering multiple real-time perspectives. The round table discussions were designed to capture practitioner, educator, learner and industry perspectives on future skills needs and opportunities for collaboration. Participants rotated between discussion tables every twenty minutes. This format enabled broad engagement across several themes and encouraged cross-sectoral exchange between Irish and French stakeholders. The discussions brought together perspectives from education and training providers, higher education, industry, public agencies and Franco-Irish partners.

A clear consensus emerged: the future of the sector depends on combining technical excellence, strong interpersonal skills, digital competence, sustainability literacy and deeper cooperation between education providers and employers. Participants also highlighted the value of Franco-Irish cooperation as a practical mechanism for mobility, innovation and shared professional learning.

Main themes identified

- Hospitality remains a human-centred profession, even as technology, AI and digital systems become more embedded in service delivery
- Future graduates need a balanced skills profile: technical, digital, interpersonal, cultural and sustainability-related

- Sustainability should be mainstreamed across curricula and professional practice rather than treated as a standalone topic
- Closer education-industry collaboration is required to address skills gaps, recruitment challenges and evolving customer expectations
- International partnerships, including Franco-Irish mobility and institutional cooperation, can support innovation and professional exchange

Résumé

Le **Forum franco-irlandais sur les arts culinaires, l'hôtellerie et le tourisme (FICAHT) 2026**, organisé par l'Ambassade de France en Irlande et accueilli par **City of Dublin FET College**, a constitué un espace de dialogue sur l'avenir de la formation et de l'enseignement dans les domaines des arts culinaires, de l'hôtellerie et du tourisme. Pendant deux jours, plus de 60 représentants institutionnels français et irlandais, enseignants et étudiants ont exploré, à travers des tables rondes, réseautage et des visites de terrain, les perspectives d'avenir de ces secteurs, ainsi que les enjeux liés à la compétitivité, l'attractivité et la durabilité. Pour la deuxième fois, le Forum a également accueilli une compétition de vidéos sur la thématique du tourisme destinée aux étudiants.

Quinze représentants de lycées professionnels français et de régions académiques, six *Education and Training Boards* (ETB) et trois universités technologiques (MTU, SETU et TU Dublin), ainsi que des partenaires institutionnels (*Higher Education Authority*, *Fáilte Ireland* et Irish Hotel Federation côté irlandais, ainsi que Campus France et Atout France côté français) ont participé à l'événement. Dr Christy Duffy, directeur général du **City of Dublin FET College**, a ouvert le Forum. L'Ambassadrice de France en Irlande Céline Place a rappelé que le réseau FICAHT illustre pleinement la valeur de la coopération franco-irlandaise et européenne. La collaboration bilatérale entre la France et l'Irlande s'est structurée et renforcée au cours des dix dernières années, donnant lieu à des partenariats concrets et à de nombreuses mobilités. A la veille de la présidence irlandaise du Conseil de l'Union européenne, l'Ambassadrice a également mis en avant le cadre stratégique « **Food 2030** » de la Commission européenne ainsi que la stratégie **From Farm to Fork**. Les tables rondes ont permis aux représentants institutionnels, aux enseignants et aux étudiants d'échanger sur les bonnes pratiques, de nourrir le débat et d'évaluer les défis auxquels sont confrontés les secteurs. Elles ont été conçues pour recueillir les perspectives des professionnels, des formateurs, des apprenants et des représentants du secteur sur les compétences de demain et les possibilités de coopération. Les participants changeaient de table de discussion toutes les vingt minutes. Ce format a favorisé une large participation autour de plusieurs thématiques et encouragé les échanges intersectoriels entre les parties prenantes françaises et irlandaises. Les discussions ont réuni des représentants des organismes d'enseignement et de formation, de l'enseignement supérieur, des entreprises, des agences publiques ainsi que des partenaires franco-irlandais.

Un consensus clair s'est dégagé : l'avenir du secteur repose sur la combinaison de l'excellence technique, de solides compétences relationnelles, de la maîtrise des outils numériques, d'une véritable culture de la durabilité et d'une coopération renforcée entre les établissements de formation et les employeurs. Les participants ont également souligné que la coopération franco-irlandaise constitue un levier concret favorisant la mobilité, l'innovation et le partage des pratiques professionnelles.

Principaux thèmes identifiés

- L'hôtellerie demeure un secteur profondément centré sur l'humain, même si les technologies, l'intelligence artificielle et les outils numériques occupent une place croissante dans la prestation de services.

- Les futurs diplômés doivent développer un profil de compétences équilibré, associant savoir-faire techniques, compétences numériques, qualités relationnelles, ouverture interculturelle et maîtrise des enjeux de durabilité.
- La durabilité doit être intégrée de manière transversale dans les programmes de formation et les pratiques professionnelles, plutôt que d'être abordée comme une thématique isolée.
- Un renforcement de la collaboration entre les établissements de formation et les entreprises est nécessaire afin de répondre aux pénuries de compétences, aux difficultés de recrutement et à l'évolution des attentes de la clientèle.
- Les partenariats internationaux, notamment la mobilité franco-irlandaise et la coopération institutionnelle, constituent des leviers d'innovation et de développement des échanges professionnels.

Objectives

- Develop a cross-industry collaborative strategy to prepare the next generation of talent in culinary arts, hospitality and tourism
- Strengthen the ongoing collaboration between the food industry and academia in France and Ireland by fostering the mobility programmes for students, interns and apprentices
- Support innovation on a local, national and european scale to attract talents and create high-quality jobs in the food industry
- Amplify the strong partnership between vocational training and industries in the culinary arts, hospitality and tourism sectors which shape the French and Irish economies
- Reflect on the French and Irish expertise and explore new paths in line with the challenges faced by the food industry

Panel discussion 1: Building Synergies Between French and Irish Expertise in Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts

Moderator: Dr Dorota Migocka-Sendlak, SEO / Skills and Engagement, Higher Education Authority

- Dr. Don O'Neill, Vice President for Global Partnerships, South East Technological University
- TJ' O Connor, lecturer in the Culinary Arts, Munster Technological University
- Dr Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire, Senior Lecturer, School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology

Summary

The multi-level collaboration fostered between the French and Irish professors and chefs is strong today, however, the history of the Franco-Irish relationship reveals an initial imbalance in favour of France, as explained by Dr Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire. The concept of gastronomy was born in France, at the beginning of the 19th century, but the 20th century marked the international influence of the French gastronomy. The French chef Paul Bocuse was baptized chef of the century and is known as the creator of the international competition the Bocuse d'Or : thanks to him, the profession of Chef came into the spotlight. Thanks to their long-term cooperation, France and Ireland are constantly working on new programmes to showcase students' expertise

Key priorities

- Strengthening the long-lasting Franco-Irish partnership in gastronomy by involving new Irish and French vocational training schools in academic and mobility programmes
- Developing sustainability-driven projects with high economic and social impact (example of SETU: the « *My Green Lab Certification* » programme implemented from 2022 to bring sustainable practices in the university's laboratories, MTU: a new pilot green biorefinery was launched in January 2026 at Kerry Campus)

Challenges identified

- Responding to the change of customers expectations who are keener to eat in coffee shops led by amateurs rather than in chef-owned restaurants. All speakers agreed on one key ongoing factor : change is happening and is shaping new forms of hospitality, tourism and cuisine
- Address the decline in the number of professionals, a consequence of this substantial transition. More amateurs without any professional training appeared in the food industry.
- Implementing green practices in the culinary sector : today, there are many food festivals organised in Ireland which showcase local and fresh products

Panel discussion 2: Learning, Mobility and Developing Future Skills for a Changing Europe

Moderator: Michelle Tierney, Enterprise Engagement Strategic Lead, Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board

- Nadia Soufiya, Head of *French+* programmes, Campus France
- Marcella Hughes, Commis Chef Instructor in Kilkenny Education and Training Board
- Students: Whitney Ward (Ballyfermot) and Rebecca Reilly (Crumlin)

Summary

The discussion focused on how international mobilities broaden students' perspectives and shape for the better a new Europe through all the synergies. Some Irish students who did an Erasmus+ mobility in France had never left Ireland before their Erasmus+ mobility, and all were delighted to have been pushed out of their comfort zone to gain new skills. The *French+Gastronomy* program was presented by Campus France, who saw how students came back having developed resilience and adaptability. Both experts, Nadia Soufiya and Marcella Hughes, highlighted that the French language is a real asset in gastronomy : the biggest fear, the language barrier, easily becomes the most valuable skill. From an intercultural perspective, professionals will serve international guests, whether in hospitality, tourism or culinary arts, which means that the programs shape students' future. Thanks to these mobilities, the first step feels much more achievable for many students.

Key priorities

- Developing innovation-driven mobility programmes to allow students to navigate a rapidly evolving European job market
- Supporting students in their training and their preparation for the future mobility : promoting language not as a barrier but as a tool

Challenges identified

- Promote mobility programmes as cultural experiences and a strategic tool for employability
- Adapt the future workforce of the culinary arts, hospitality and tourism sectors to the green and digital transitions

Round Table 1: Meeting Industry Needs

Theme: Skills for the future hospitality workforce and evolving customer expectations.

Facilitator: Janet Moore, Chair, Dublin Branch, Irish Hotel Federation.

Summary

Participants agreed that hospitality remains fundamentally a people-centred profession. While technology is reshaping operations, customer communication and booking systems, it should enhance rather than replace human interaction. The group emphasised that authentic service, clear communication and the ability to create memorable experiences remain central to the sector's value proposition.

Key priorities

- Balancing technology with human interaction and personal service
- Developing digital competence, including AI awareness, online booking systems, CRM tools, chatbots and data literacy
- Responding to higher customer expectations for personalised, seamless and authentic experiences
- Strengthening communication, empathy, cultural awareness and interpersonal skills.
- Promoting continuous learning, career development and leadership through coaching and mentoring
- Repositioning hospitality as a respected profession, not simply an industry

Challenges identified

- Recruitment and retention of skilled chefs and hospitality staff
- High housing costs and transport issues affecting workforce availability, particularly in urban centres
- A gap between industry expectations and students' interpersonal or customer-facing skills
- Need for stronger language skills to support international tourism and guest engagement
- Improving recognition, promotion and attractiveness of careers in hospitality

Round Table 2: Developing Talent for Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Hospitality

Theme: Developing talent for sustainable tourism and responsible hospitality.

Facilitators: Fiona Dunne, Regional Development Manager and Eimear Cleary, Climate Action Officer, Failte Ireland

Summary

This discussion focused on the need to embed sustainability across hospitality and tourism education. Participants argued that sustainability should not be treated as a separate or optional topic. Instead, it should be integrated into curriculum design, workplace learning, procurement, food systems, resource management and customer experience.

Key priorities

- Moving beyond general awareness towards practical sustainability competence
- Helping learners understand both why sustainable practices matter and how they are implemented in real settings
- Embedding environmental, economic and social sustainability across programmes
- Developing knowledge of local sourcing, sustainable procurement, supply chains and responsible purchasing
- Reducing food waste and improving resource management
- Developing carbon literacy and awareness of energy, waste and community impact
- Strengthening links between schools, FET providers, higher education, restaurants, hotels and tourism bodies

Challenges identified

- Older buildings and infrastructure can limit sustainable practice
- Cost pressures can make sustainable choices more difficult for providers and businesses
- Sustainability is not yet consistently embedded in curricula or assessment
- Staff development is required so that teachers and trainers can model sustainable practice confidently
- AI and digital tools should be used critically and appropriately within sustainability learning

Round Table 3: Franco-Irish Collaboration in Action

Theme: The Lycée de Tarbes–Munster Technological University partnership as a practical model of collaboration.

Facilitators: Philippe Strub, Lycée professionnel Lautréamont de Tarbes and Lisa O’Brien, Department of Tourism & Hospitality, Munster Technological University

Summary

This discussion considered how practical Franco-Irish cooperation can support learner mobility, staff exchange, curriculum development and sharing of good practice. The Lycée de Tarbes–MTU partnership was viewed as a useful example of collaboration that could inform future institutional links between France and Ireland.

Key priorities

- Developing sustainable institutional partnerships rather than one-off exchanges
- Using Erasmus+ and other European mechanisms to support student and staff mobility
- Building consortia between education providers, industry partners and public bodies
- Addressing practical barriers such as placements, accommodation and learner support
- Maintaining clear communication between partner organisations
- Sharing good practice and scaling successful models of Franco-Irish cooperation

Round Table 4: Industry Perspectives: What Skills and Competencies Are Employers Looking For?

Theme: skills needed from the institutions or students

Facilitators: Colin Dapot, Head chef of the French restaurant *Excuse my French*

Summary

This discussion focused primarily on Colin’s professional background, including his previous experience at Fallon & Byrne. It also explored a comparison between the French and Irish hospitality and restaurant sectors. From his perspective, Colin shared his expectations regarding training, highlighting the importance of developing practical skills, adaptability, and industry-oriented learning to meet the evolving need of the sector.

Challenges identified

- Employers increasingly value adaptable graduates with strong communication and customer service skills alongside technical competence
- Digital literacy, problem-solving and teamwork were identified as core workplace competencies
- Closer collaboration between employers and education providers was seen as essential to ensure programmes remain aligned with changing industry needs

Tourism Competition

Seven French students took part in the competition by submitting a video based on the theme *“Building a cultural bridge between France and Ireland: Demonstrating professional gesture that reveals the gastronomic and tourism identity of both nations.”* The competition was divided into two categories: Upper Secondary/Post-Leaving Certificate and Undergraduate Level (level 6/7/8). The participating schools were Lycée Savary-Ferry, Lycée Lautréamont de Tarbes, CCI Maine-et-Loire and Lycée Henri Senez from Hénin Baumont. The students from Lycée Lautréamont de Tarbes and from Lycée Henri Senez took first place across two different categories. The high quality of the video submission showcased a strong spirit of Franco-Irish cooperation.

Challenges: We expect Irish students and institutions to participate in the next edition of the Tourism competition with the aim of building Franco-Irish cooperation.

Field Visits and Experiential Learning

The participants then had the opportunity to take part in two field visits. The first visit was to the **restaurant Fallon & Byrne** in the center of Dublin, where they toured the dining room, the wine cellar, the food hall and the Exchange, followed by a testing session.

The following day, they visited **Airfield Estate, Dublin’s only working urban farm and gardens**. As a sustainable food hub, Airfield Estate promotes environmentally responsible farming, local food production, biodiversity and food education. During the visit, participants explored the estate and took part in an interactive food demonstration workshop, providing further into the farm-to-table approach and the importance of sustainable food systems.

Cross-cutting Findings

Human-centred hospitality

Technology will continue to transform the sector, but participants were clear that hospitality depends on empathy, welcome, trust, communication and personalised service.

Balanced future skills

Learners need a balanced profile that combines technical craft, digital capability, customer service, sustainability literacy, communication and cultural awareness.

Sustainability as core competence

Sustainability should be embedded across education and training programmes, workplace learning and operational practice.

Education-industry alignment

Closer links with employers are needed to ensure programmes reflect current and emerging skills needs.

Professional identity and career pathways

Participants highlighted the importance of presenting hospitality as a valued profession with clear routes for progression, leadership and lifelong learning.

International collaboration

Franco-Irish cooperation offers a practical route for mobility, curriculum enrichment, shared learning and innovation across the sector.

Conclusion

The round table discussions demonstrated strong alignment between education, industry and public stakeholders on the future direction of culinary arts, hospitality and tourism education. Participants identified the need to prepare learners for a sector that is increasingly digital, sustainability-focused and internationally connected, while retaining the human qualities that define excellent hospitality.

FICAHT 2026 created a valuable space for Franco-Irish dialogue and confirmed the potential for deeper cooperation between institutions, agencies and industry partners in both countries. The outcomes of the round tables provide a useful basis for future collaboration, mobility and shared professional development.

Appendix: list of institutions

- Campus des métiers et qualifications d'excellence Haut de France
- Campus France
- Centre Pierre Cointreau à Angers
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board
- City of Dublin FET College Educational Service to Prisons and Pathways Post Release Centre
- Cork Education and Training Board - Kinsale Campus
- ESTHUA
- Failte Ireland
- Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board
- Higher Education Authority
- Irish Hotel Federation
- Lycée Christian Bourquin
- Lycée des métiers Lautréamont
- Lycée des métiers Pierre
- Lycée d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme de Gascogne
- Lycée Hôtelier Raymond Mondon
- Lycée Professionnel Alain Fournier
- Lycée Professionnel Simon Lazard
- Lycée professionnel Stanislas hôtellerie-restauration
- Lycée Saint Quentin
- Lycée Savary-Ferry, Arras
- Mountjoy West Education
- Munster Technological University
- Rectorat de la Région Académique Grand Est et de l'académie de Nancy-Metz
- Région académique Occitanie
- South-East Technological University
- Tipperary Education and Training Board
- TU Dublin