

India France Cooperation in Education Sector

India and France have significantly strengthened their educational partnership in recent years, with student mobility, academic collaboration, and research cooperation emerging as key areas of the bilateral relationship. This momentum was reinforced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Paris in July 2023 when France announced its ambition to welcome 30,000 Indian students by 2030, compared with approximately 10,000 at present. This objective is in accordance with the shared goals under the *Horizon 2047* framework, and the India-France Innovation Roadmap 2030, under which both sides recognize that investment in STEM education, research partnerships, mobility of talent, and institutional collaboration will play a critical role in preparing future generations to address global challenges, with strengthened people-to-people ties serving as a foundation of the bilateral partnership.

2. Central to achieving the student mobility target is the International Classes initiative which, since September 2024, has been rolled out across around 35 French universities and schools, helping non-French-speaking students reach B2-level French proficiency over two semesters without requiring an entrance exam, and offering direct admission into French-taught undergraduate programs upon completion. Complementing this, France introduced five-year Schengen visas in 2023 for Indian alumni who completed at least a semester of Master's-level study programme in the country.

3. A key priority within this framework is the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ). France was the first country to sign an MRQ agreement with India, back in 2018, and both sides now intend to expand that framework to cover a broader range of academic disciplines, regulated professions, and emerging technology domains, supporting greater academic mobility, dual-degree programmes, and doctoral co-supervision arrangements.

4. Several Indian and French higher educational institutions have signed cooperation agreements with each other. There is also a vibrant student exchange programme between IIMs and other Indian institutions, and institutions in France like ESCP, ESSEC and HEC where a large number of Indian students come for exchange programmes every year. A wide array of MoUs has been signed between individual institutions, spanning research and faculty exchange agreements (e.g., IIT Bombay–Université Côte d'Azur, IIT Delhi–Institut Mines-Télécom), innovation and entrepreneurship partnerships in areas like energy and sustainability (e.g., IIT Delhi with FITT and French partners), strategic technology collaborations (e.g., IIT Tirupati–Safran Electronics & Defense on navigation systems, IIT Hyderabad–Dassault Systèmes on 3D computing), and numerous student exchange agreements (e.g., IIT Madras with ESCP Business School and Université de Limoges). A particularly significant addition to this institutional cooperation is the

2026 Declaration of Intent signed in Nice between a network of participating Indian Institutes of Technology together with the Indian Institute of Science on one side, and UDICE (a group of 13 French research-intensive universities including institutions such as Sorbonne Université, Université Paris-Saclay, and Institut Polytechnique de Paris). Through this declaration, the IITs and UDICE have expressed a shared intent to promote academic, scientific, and research collaboration, with an initial focus on interdisciplinary deep technologies and their applications, facilitating exchanges of scholars, faculty, and students, joint research, and participation in academic meetings.

5. Academic and scientific engagement has also been strengthened through high-level bilateral platforms. The High-Level Academic and Scientific Meetings held at AIIMS, New Delhi, in February 2024 brought together more than 200 universities, research institutions, and scientific organizations from India and France. The discussions highlighted opportunities for joint and double-degree programmes, collaborative research, and deeper institutional linkages.

6. This cooperation was further advanced through the *Bharat Innovates* event, a national programme of India's Ministry of Education designed as a global accelerator for innovations emerging from Indian higher-education institutions. Held in Nice in June 2026, the programme sought to establish a long-term bridge between India's innovation ecosystem, including start-ups, higher-education institutions, laboratories, and research parks, and global stakeholders such as corporations, investors, incubators, accelerators, universities, research institutions, governments, and overseas alumni. Its objective was to facilitate international partnerships, investment, technology collaboration, and global market access for innovations originating in Indian institutions.

7. Beyond student mobility, the two nations have also built out professional and skills-based pathways. The Young Professionals Scheme, operationalized in 2024 under the 2018 India-France Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement, allows reciprocal mobility for young people aged 18 to 35, with an annual quota of 500 participants who receive an initial 12-month work visa extendable to 24 months and further renewable through employment contracts; the scheme is jointly administered by India's National Skill Development Corporation and France's Office of Immigration and Integration.

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