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## FRANKREICH

BENCHMARK DER WELT

FRANCE  
BENCHMARK OF THE WORLD



The French Republic has long been a benchmark for the world – its language, its cuisine, its wines and its elegant fashion have many followers. But France is also a country with a tradition of ground-breaking reforms.

Text: Stephan Burianek

# FRANCE ON THE MARCH!

Elegant beauty: Bird's eye view of Boulevard Haussmann, with the famous Opéra Garnier in the background.



One of the world's most beautiful restaurants: Le Train Bleu in the Gare de Lyon railway station in Paris, right: The Mont Blanc is Europe's highest mountain.



FACTS & FIGURES

FRANCE

**Official name:** French Republic (République française)  
**Administration:** 18 regions (Europe and overseas), 5 overseas collectivities, 1 overseas territory, 1 special collectivity (New Caledonia)  
**Capital:** Paris  
**Government:** unitary semi-presidential  
**Area:** 632,734 km²  
**Population:** 67,422,000  
**GDP per capita:** 39,907 USD (2020)



There is no need to explain the value of the French culture for the world. The French language is an essential factor in diplomatic relations, and it is no coincidence that this magazine bears a Francophone title. There are good reasons for calling the motherland of this world language a Grande Nation, and anyone who followed the news lately knows that the French Republic is determined to maintain its influence on a global level.

An abstract of the remarkable history could start with the founding of the Académie française by the powerful statesman Cardinal de Richelieu in 1635, with the aim to standardise and to cultivate the French language, providing among others binding publications a mandatory dictionary. From this point on French became the “lingua franca”, replacing Italian as the main language at European courts. At the same time the rationalistic philosopher René Descartes wrote, still in Latin, a book that contained the three famous words “Cogito ergo sum” – “I think, therefore I am”, establishing a long tradition of philosophers that shaped the rational and critical thinking of the French elites, and later of the whole nation, for centuries.

Until today, a good educational background and an intellectual appearance is considered an important vector not only for job candidates in any sector, but especially demanded by the public for officials. The 40 brains trust members of the still existing Académie française who represent the crème de la crème of the nation's intellectuals are mainly writers and philosophers. Many state presidents and ministers, even in the current government, wrote books, the most famous among them is most likely President Charles de Gaulle. This said, it seems almost logical that the French ambassador to Austria, Gilles Pécout, is a renowned historian (see the interview starting on page 32).



The Vallon des Auffes is a traditional fishing haven in Marseille.



A chimera demon at the Cathedral Notre-Dame.



Progress throughout centuries: Eiffel Tower with high-rise buildings in the La Défense business district of Paris.



FACTS

Business relations between France and Austria

France is the second largest economy within the EU and Austria's fifth important export market worldwide. The Austrian supply of machines and exports into the automotive and aviation industries has decreased since the pandemic (automotive: -20.4 percent in 2020, aviation: -29 percent), but tripled in the railway industry. More than 460 Austrian companies have subsidiaries in France, employing 18,900 people. While France is Austria's 5th most important export market (6.1 billion Euro in 2020), it ranks only 10th in Austria's import statistics (3.7 billion). France mainly exports aircrafts and cars, pharmaceuticals, gas turbines and vehicle parts, food and beverage products (wine & cheese), and beauty products. Next to the urban expansion project Le Grand Paris, the future large-scale projects that bear chances for Austrian companies will be the Alpine World Ski Championships 2023 in Courchevel-Méribel, and the Olympic Summer Games 2024 in Paris.



Old and new history: The Louvre Museum with the Louvre Pyramid (above, left), the Luma Arles art center (above, right), and the splendid Palace of Versailles (large picture).

Cardinal de Richelieu not only found the Académie française, but also transformed France into a centralistic state, with Paris as starting and final point of radiating traffic ways. The capital of France has many traditions, one of which is being both a sanctuary and a swanky place of residence for foreigners of the world. It was a safe haven for Polish aris-tocrats, for example, who fled their homeland after a failed uprising against the Russian occupation. Later, after the Russian Revolution, Paris served the same purpose for many Russians.

And who would not want to live in Paris, if one could afford it? The city has become a synonym for romance, which might be also thanks to many Hollywood movies spreading this cliché. By many, it is considered the most beautiful city on this planet. The classicistic facades that line the big avenues, however, are the result of a radical urban renewal project which started around 1850 by the prefect as well as city planner Georges-Eugène Haussmann. They testify that in order to clear the way for the future, rational albeit unpopular measures sometimes have to be taken – sometimes necessary in a country, in which compromises are often interpreted as signs of a certain weakness.

In German, “to live like God in France” is a famous

phrase describing a person living in a paradise world. One can list a plenty of reasons for this. From a geographical point of view, the mainland that is often called the “Hexagon” due to its shape has it all: dense forests, high mountains, hilly vineyards, beautiful lakes – and even two seashores: the palm-lined Mediterranean coast and the rough Atlantic coast. And, of course, there is also Overseas France (“La France d’outre-mer”), consisting of thirteen colonial leftover territories, among them Réunion in the Indian Ocean, French Guiana in South America, or the islands of French Polynesia in the South Pacific Ocean.

According to Atout France, the national tourism board, despite the pandemic situation the Grande Nation has defended its position as the world’s leading destination with 34 million visitors in 2020, and approximately 45 million visitors in 2021 – a position France has been holding for more than twenty years. Before the pandemic, for comparison, France registered 90 million international arrivals and 440 million overnight stays, 78 percent of which resulted from EU countries.

When it comes to nature, culture, and cuisine visitors find high-quality options all over the Republic. Floating with a ship along the Canal du Midi in the Languedoc region, or cycling by the famous castles of

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Ancient Roman aqueduct Pont du Gard in Southern France (right), Arc de Triomphe in Paris (right, below).



French traditional cafe located on the Place de la Sorbonne in Paris.



The cliffs of Étretat; French cheese.

the Loire Valley are classics with a long touristic tradition. Exploring the extinct volcanos of the Chaîne des Puys in central France's Auvergne region, by mountain bikes or by paragliders has become more popular in recent years. And of course there are many sustainable ways of travelling, the most environmentally friendly of which is probably a new trend called "forest bathing" – a natural therapy by spending time in the woods, for example in a national park in Burgundy.

Apropos Burgundy: Even in the country's most famous wine regions travellers find sleepy peasant villages with an authentic atmosphere enhanced by medieval churches and down-to-earth winemakers. Gourmets nevertheless will always find a good bistro for lunch or a fabulous haute cuisine restaurant on the countryside, and some will even carry the Michelin Guide, a French factotum, with them. And probably they will get in touch with some of the artisanal cheeses each region has to offer. The richness in cheese is legendary since President Charles de Gaulle is said to have concluded that it is hard to rule a country "with 248 cheese variants". There are probably more.

Travellers might notice that the famous national motto "Liberty, equality, fraternity" – a slogan that became popular during the French Revolution and a

legacy deriving from the Age of Enlightenment – is written above every French school door. As peaceful as these three terms sound, they are at the same time inevitably in conflict to each other, as Joseph De Weck indicates in his new book "Emmanuel Macron. Der revolutionäre Präsident" ("The revolutionary President", available only in German). The author traces back the remarkable success story of President Emmanuel Macron to a nation that has seen its paradise crumbling due to decades of political stagnation.

It was indeed a remarkable victory for the candidate Macron, who almost came out from close to scratch. With his own, newly founded party "En Marche!" (now: "La République en Marche") he won the presidential election in May 2017 with a campaign that managed to build up hopes for a nation that has been confronted with an increasing social dissatisfaction and with Islamist terror attacks in the past. In intellectual and at the same time absorbing speeches, he hit the spot of many citizens, promising them a better future in case they would all stand together to reform and develop the country under his command. The youngest president in the history of France has already proven that with a solid and rational philosophical foundation he distinguishes himself from populist dazblers in Europe.

It seems impossible to assign him to either the right or the left side of the political spectrum. On one hand he follows an extremely economy friendly path. On the other hand he undertook remarkable steps in order to raise the social standard of many people. He considerably raised the minimum level of wages and retirement pensions, doubled the paternity leave days, halved the size of school classes in socially difficult districts, recruited more teachers, and raised their in-

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK

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## INSIDE SANOFI OUR FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKING ENVIRONMENT



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Little Venice in Colmar, Alsace.



Mont Saint Michel Abbey, Normandy.



Nancy was the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine, later it became the French capital of Art Nouveau (clockwise from above left): Room in the Museum of the École de Nancy, the opera house on the classicist Place Stanislas, and one of many Art Nouveau doors.

come.

This list indicates that the French President has far-reaching powers. Moreover, Macron has shown remarkable staying power qualities from the very beginning: When the Yellow Vests Protests peaked during winter 2018/2019, for example, he started what he called a “Grand National Debate”, the result of which can still be found on the website [granddebat.fr](http://granddebat.fr): 10,134 local meetings were held, and Emmanuel Macron toured the country in order to personally face the questions of the protesters, who demanded a reduction of petrol prices and taxes.

Besides this, the economic reforms implemented by Macron soon made an impact: In 2019, the year before the pandemic hit the world, France took the European lead in foreign investments, followed by Great Britain and Germany. The unemployment rate fell down to 8.1 percent in February 2020, compared to 9.5 percent in April 2017.

Macron also raised the international esteem by representing clear positions. For example, he takes a clear stand against EU countries that undermine the division of powers and the freedom of press, and he has shown allergic reactions with respect to NATO partners who revealed a lack of solidarity. The retirement of Germany’s chancellor Angela Merkel last December is broadly considered as a chance for the French President to gain the upper hand over the leadership of the European Union. Before taking over the Presidency of the Council in January this year, Macron declared his will to push-on necessary reforms (see interview with H.E. Gilles Pécout). He is determined to continue the mostly successful EU history that was ingeniously initiated by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman 72 years ago.

The EU Presidency is seen as a good opportunity for Macron to show his international leadership abilities also to the French, as he is generally expected to become re-elected in April this year. If he will do so, he is on a good way to secure a historical place next to his personal heroes, the former French Presidents Charles de Gaulle and François Mitterrand. Under the supervision of Macron, France could resume its role as a bridge builder within the EU and as a benchmark for the Western world.

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK, VILLE DE NANCY / REGINE DATIN

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## Intercultural networking – France up close

## What makes the Francophile network of the Franco-Austrian Chamber of Commerce so special?

Founded in 1989, our private organisation is based in Vienna and today counts around 300 members, including French business branches settled in Austria as well as Austrian firms and individuals. We have never had to rely on government subsidies and even during the past two years of the pandemic we have chosen not to take advantage of any public aid. The solidarity between our members is very strong. Not a single member has left us - on the contrary, we have supported smaller members to enable them to remain part of the CCFA.

When I was elected president in 1991, my first plan was to create a dynamic team. In 1998, Céline Garaudy took over the direction of the Franco-Austrian Chamber of Commerce. She and I quickly became a well-coordinated team: I had the network and connections, and she had the skills it took to look after our members as well as to expand membership (we now have not only large corporations as members, but also privately-owned companies, start-ups, etc.). We agreed that we did not want to grow too quickly; on the one hand, because we did not want to take any financial risk, and, on the other hand, so that we could focus our attention on our existing members. I can say that our small, dynamic team behind the CCEA - with

only two additional employees in addition to Céline Garaudy, namely Virginie Van Reepingen as head of communications and Katja Feist as assistant - is extremely committed and multi-talented.

**The CCFA doesn't solely run via membership fees but also provides professional services to French and Austrian companies.**

Yes, the Franco-Austrian Chamber of Commerce provides the following services to French companies: domiciling of companies, placement of commercial agents/employees, provision of business information and market-relevant data about both countries, provision of the chamber's French and Austrian network of contacts - and all of this in cooperation with the business department of the French Embassy, the Business France agency and the so-called "Conseillers du Commerce Extérieur".

**Your motto is “Ensemble c’est mieux! - stronger together.” How have you coped with the past two years?**

Considering both the global and local effects of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as the decision of the Austrian government to manage its spread, the Franco-Austrian Chamber of Commerce already cancelled all of its events in March 2020 and immediately set up substitute services to look after our members.

Together with Céline Garaudy, whom would I like to thank in particular for her leadership during this crisis, our goal was to ensure that the consequences of the pandemic for our members and the chamber as a



**The CCFA Board.**

PHOTOS: CCFA

whole would be kept to a minimum. Even though we've had to suspend our events and face-to-face meetings for some time, this did not mean that the CCFa could not continue its work in some form or another. Our team remained in contact with our members via phone and email throughout.

Our biannual magazine “CALÉIDOSCOPE” and our online publications (website NEWS section, Facebook page, LinkedIn page) have kept our network very active. “CALÉIDOSCOPE” is sent to all of our members and is also available free of charge in some institutions, such as the French Embassy, the French Consulate and the French Institute in Vienna, businesses with client traffic, chambers of commerce in France, etc. As a member, you also have the opportunity to place articles in the magazine and thus introduce your business to other members quickly and efficiently, present new products or announce other news about your business, but also to look for new business partners. Advertisements can also be placed at affordable rates. Furthermore, every member can

also introduce him or herself free of charge in the annual members' directory, which is also made available to everyone, on an A6 page. "CALÉIDOSCOPE" is, of course, also published online on [www.ccfa.at](http://www.ccfa.at)

**How do you define "networking à la française" - drinking champagne while doing business?**

Distinguished events, as they are known in Parisian circles, gala events with prominent guest speakers from politics and business, oyster and champagne evenings, corporate presentations, cultural exchange visits, sports activities – once or twice a month, these types of meetings provide the opportunity for both cultural and business exchange, as well as the chance to form new contacts and business relationships.

Our events are in German and are usually held in Vienna. And for those who aren't quite convinced yet: You can always get in touch with the chamber management to arrange to take part in an event as part of a "taster session"!



**A well-functioning team: Alain de Krassny with Céline Garaudy.**

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# France in fascinating numbers

With **90 million** international visits in 2019 (and 45 m. in 2021) France is the number one destination of the world

**40** Académie française members manage and control the French language

The typical French ate **26.5 kg cheese** in 2018 and drank **50.7 litres of wine** in 2017

The Eiffel Tower weighs **10.1 tons** in total, with the foundation included

The French national football team is the current world champion, having won the world cup **2 times** in total

The French railway system counts more than **29.000 kilometres**





# H.E. Gilles Pécout

“We absolutely have to decarbonise our economies.”

Interview: Stephan Burianek  
Photos: Rois & Stubenrauch

The Ambassador of France to Austria talks about the goals of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, about developing the business relations between France and Austria, and about his view of nation building as a historian.

**CD:** You are a renowned historian specialised in Italian and European history, and besides a historical atlas of France you wrote a book about the development of the unification of Italy, the Risorgimento. How did you become interested in this topic?

**GILLES PÉCOUT :** As a historian of Italy and Europe in the 19th century I was interested by the new process of nation building in that time period. It is always interesting to reflect upon a process of nation and state building, even now as a diplomat, and above all as a diplomat currently inaugurating the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. I had the opportunity to write a book about frontiers in Europe and I am fully convinced that there is no antinomy between a national process and something international, with values that are shared. As a historian, I have studied how a national process could at the same time be a European one. The Italian unification was an international process, with French and international help. It is proven that in the long 19th century a national process was a national and an international feeling at the same time. This is a lesson for us now in a historical way – methodically and ideologically – to think Europe both as a global process and a national one.

**France, in contrast, has been a strong centralised country for a much longer time. It is interesting, however, that for many years we have seen strong secession movements in Europe. From a historian point of view: Are unified countries more solid than smaller, hence more nationalistic countries?**

From both a historical and a current point of view I think that the most important element for a nation state is the sense of belonging, and we could have a common sense of belonging even with diversity within the same country. The second important vector is the spreading of democracy.

That’s why centralised democratic states could manage to unify or to stay strong. The question of the dimension of the state is another one: The 19th and part of the 20th century were the centuries of the great empires and great states – with and without democracy, and with and without liberalism. A great empire or a great state does not manage to stay strong when liberalism and democracy are forces against the power. We know, for instance, that after the great empires of the 20th century, like the Soviet Union, we had many smaller states, but in these states it was possible to develop a new democratic sense. Hence, the dimension is not important. By the way, the reflexion of the German theorist Justus Möser about the early modern capitalism shall be remembered.

**France is holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union until June this year. In the beginning of the term President Emanuel Macron made clear his will to push on reforms for a further development of the EU. What are the goals and visions for Europe that France is seeking to achieve?**

It is not only about reforming the EU, it is in fact to assure that Europe could work as a political and sovereign entity, as well as an autonomous but not closed economic entity, and as a community of shared values. It is about rebuilding what has to be rebuilt. For this, the first key notion for President Macron is to be sure to have a political European continent which is able to work upon the system of Schengen, which is not a reform but a rebuilding of Schengen, in order to secure our outer borders, and at the same time to increase the obligatory mobility within Europe.

The second great key notion of President Macron is to conciliate a new concept and a far reaching vision of progress and growth, which is linked to our values concerning the environment and durability, as well as to our

social values. In the programme of President Macron we have an important social part in the part of the recovery and growth, for instance about the inequality between women and men, the minimum wage, or the protection of workers in digital platforms.

The third key notion should be about the sense of belonging on the basis of common values and the rule of law, and the fact to assure to belong to a same culture. “Same culture”, of course, does not mean that this culture does not accept diversity. In this context, I would like to cite the famous EU motto “United in diversity”.

The consequences are very concrete legal actions in context with measures regarding the digital protection and regarding minimal wages, and above all the set of rules about the necessity of decarbonising our economy.

**Half of Europe’s nuclear power plants are situated in France. Against this background it seems logical that France wants to classify electricity generated by nuclear power as “green” energy – an undertaking that is being already pursued by the European Commission. But how can this find approval among the member states of the EU, especially with Austria, and among the EU population?**

We know that this is an important question for our bilateral relationships with Austria. We will have to explain the French position in this regard, which is also the European one: We absolutely have to decarbonise our industries, and the states in front of this aim do not all have the same means. In France, we will have to increase our electric mix in the framework of our energy mix, and for this we have to consider that nuclear energy is one of the possible transition energy types. The French government has committed the will of very well checking all the power plant systems, and it has pointedly declared that, for instance, the coal-

## H.E. GILLES PÉCOUT

was professor and director of the Department of History École normale supérieure in Paris. He holds the chair of Political and Cultural History of 19th century Italy and Mediterranean Europe at the Sorbonne. In 2016, he was appointed rector of the Île-de-France Academic Region and rector of the Academy of Paris. He became the Ambassador of France in Austria in September 2020.





fired power plants will be closed, with the last one to close already in 2023. So, there is a precise programme for this project. We are sure that our will of developing and increasing the nuclear energy is necessary, albeit with very precise and rigorous limits. This said, France is not the only country considering the nuclear energy to become a transition mean of energy.

**In which matters do you regard Austria as strong partner within the EU and globally?**

The diplomatic relationships between our two countries are really good. We have developed a top level dialogue, as our governments are used to meet and talk. With respect to important international dossiers like in the Euro-Mediterranean affairs, the crisis of Northern Europe, or the situation between the Ukraine and Russia, Austria and France are aligned.

**Could Austria's permanent neutrality laid down in its constitution interfere with rebuilding the Schengen Agreement?**

Despite the historically respectable, great Austrian dogma of neutrality, Austria is participating in training programmes in our common defence against terrorism, and an Austrian general is currently at the head of EUTM Mali. One of our most important issues of shared programmes is the fight against terrorism. Last November, we had a great conference here in Vienna, launched by the Federal Minister for Women and Integration Susanne Raab, and our French Minister Marlène Schiappa was present. We have many common objectives.

Due to its colonial history, France has left its marks in many regions, especially on the African continent. For several years now, China has raised its influence in African countries, also with regard to rare-earths elements located there. How does France evaluate the situation in Africa nowadays, and are there plans to intensify the relationships with certain African countries?

Of course we have a historical, specific relationship with many countries in Africa. We are present in the Northern African sta-



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tes, for example. We have to make sure that the French interests do not work against the local interests, and we also have duties. Take the Covid crisis situation, for instance: Because of our specific relationships France had a leading position in helping African countries. Due to the use of the same language, we have a particular mission, and we are also maintaining intellectual, cultural, and educational relationships with Franco-phone countries.

Yes, China is present in Africa, but this is not new. The question is to be sure that by our presence all the internal economic, social, and cultural balances are respected, and also that China is not the only one power there.

**The economic ties between Austria and France are strong. However, do you see a potential for more development?**

We have great and important business relations, but at the same time symmetrically they are not very well balanced. We can observe that in the last years France became a very important land of investment for Austrian interests in many sectors, vice versa this is not so much the case. We have to develop the market into this direction. Hence, together with large organisations on both sides, I started to organise more frequent meetings between our industrial and trade players.

**Maybe the reason for this disequilibrium is based on the fact that Austrians tend to be more informed about the Grande Nation than vice versa. Do you see a way to change this?**

There are no branches of French business schools in Austria. I have already star-

ted to discuss this issue with French and with Austrian institutions, and I am sure we will manage to set up something in Austria. Studying in Austria will provide a way for young and future business managers to understand not only the Austrian market but also the Balkan and Middle European markets. I would like to add that increasing our academic, cultural and educational relationships – both regarding the number of French students present in Austria, and vice versa – is part of our mission. This is not a small question, but important for our future.

**Will this topic be present during the French Presidency of the Council of the EU?**

Two main topics will be particularly dealt with. The mobility of young people and the capacity to have a European professional insertion. Many conferences will be organised in order to think about this particular topic, and in Austria a great forum “L’Europe des Etudiants et des Chercheurs” (“Europe of Students and Researchers”) will take place. Then the biodiversity and Green Deal in coordination with each member state of the EU. We will launch the “Journées Vertes Européennes de Vienne” (“Green European Days of Vienna”). The first will be about transmission and education about biodiversity, the second about the green negotiation and the question how to include the biodiversity in the diplomatic negotiations, starting by the point of the Ocean Summit, and the third manifestation will be about green financing. Our partners will be the University of Vienna, the Natural History Museum of Vienna, Amundi Austria, and French foundations.



CITROËN

BUSINESS DAYS

07.03. – 31.03.

ë-JUMPER

ë-BERLINGO KASTENWAGEN

ë-JUMPY

# AUSGEZEICHNETE ANGEBOTE FÜR DIE NEUEN CITROËN PRO ë-MODELLE

	BIS ZU 17 M³ LADEVOLUMEN GENAUSO WIE BEI BENZINER UND DIESEL	AB <b>279€</b> /MONAT* FÜR LEASING UND VERSICHERUNG
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Symbolfoto. Stand: März 2022. ë-LCV Range: ZEV Reichweite: 117 – 320 km, Verbrauch: 20,0 – 38,2 kWh; CO<sub>2</sub>Emission: 0 g/km. Die angegebenen Werte beziehen sich jeweils auf die Serienausstattung und sind als Richtwerte zu verstehen. \*ë-Berlingo: ZEV Reichweite: 272 – 277 km, Verbrauch: 20,0 – 20,4 kWh; CO<sub>2</sub>Emission: 0 g/km. Die angegebenen Werte beziehen sich jeweils auf die Serienausstattung und sind als Richtwerte zu verstehen. Leasingrate für ë-Berlingo Kastenwagen M Batterie 50 kWh Komfort, Unternehmerangebot netto, exkl. MwSt., 30% Eigenleistung, zzgl. Bearbeitungs- und Rechtsgeschäftsgeb., 48 Monate Laufzeit, 10.000 km Fahrleistung pro Jahr. Kaufpreis beinhaltet einen E-Mobilitätsbonus (Importeursanteil), Finanzierungsbonus (bei Finanzierung über die PSA Bank Österreich) sowie Versicherungsbonus (bei Abschluss eines Versicherungsvorteilssets über die PSA Versicherung; Versicherer: GARANTIA Versicherungs-AG Österreich, Moserstraße 33, 5020 Salzburg). Angebot inkl. CITROËN ESSENTIALdrive gratis für 48 Monate/100.000 km (Garantieverlängerung gemäß den Bedingungen der CITROËN Österreich GmbH) sowie Versicherungsvorteilssets (Flat-Rate Prämie für Versicherungsnehmer in B/M Stufe 9 und besser). Gültig bei Kaufvertrag bis 31.03.2022 bei teilnehmenden CITROËN Partnern. Angebot der PSA Bank Österreich, Niederlassung der PSA Bank Deutschland GmbH für Unternehmer - unterliegt nicht dem VGrG. Weitere Details bei Ihrem CITROËN-Händler. Satzfehler vorbehalten.