

New Republic, a New Milestone in a Growing Campus

Efrei expands to support new ways of learning and engaging on campus.

🕒 Read 5 minutes

In Villejuif (France), a site that had stood vacant for more than a decade has been given a new purpose. It is now home to New Republic — a 4,600 m² building that expands the Efrei campus. More than just an expansion, the project embodies a broader vision: that of a contemporary engineering school designed to be both appealing and grounded in real-world practice.

Founded in 1936 and based in Villejuif since 1987, Efrei has continued to grow. Over the past fifteen years, student numbers have risen from around one thousand to more than 5,000. This growth led the school to gradually invest in new sites before embarking on a new challenge: designing an entirely new building from the ground up, conceived as a place to live, learn and collaborate.

“Of course, we needed more space. But above all, we needed a place that inspires and resonates — one that reflects what Efrei is today.”

FRÉDÉRIC MEUNIER, DIRECTOR OF EFREI

Bringing a learning vision to life

In an increasingly competitive higher education landscape, Efrei stands out as a school where technology underpins every program, from engineering to cybersecurity, from data to digital communication.

This ambition is directly reflected in the design of the spaces. Classrooms, of course, but also a wide range of environments dedicated to collaboration, individual focus and informal interaction. The building includes around thirty teaching rooms, numerous enclosed booths — small, freely accessible spaces for group work or individual focus — a large cafeteria, coworking areas, as well as a gym and a dance studio.

New Republic is the result of years of learning from previous projects:

“We built on the strengths of our existing sites to imagine a building that truly meets the needs of students and staff. New Republic is the result — shaped with particular attention to wellbeing and community.”

PEGGY BLANCHIN, HEAD OF REAL ESTATE AT EFREI

A collaboration built on trust and creativity

A partner to Efrei for more than ten years, Steelcase was naturally involved in the project. Beyond furniture, Steelcase's Design Studio teams supported the school in shaping and delivering a comprehensive interior design concept, including styling, aligned with its ambitions and its determination to stand out.

From spatial design to visual language, every element was treated as part of a cohesive whole: palettes, textures, material contrasts and aesthetic choices come together to create distinctive, expressive environments. This translates into a unified experience that supports the educational vision and contributes to the campus's appeal.

“Steelcase was not just a furniture supplier, but a true creative partner. The team understood our identity and embraced our way of thinking about space.”

FRÉDÉRIC MEUNIER, DIRECTOR OF EFREI

While classrooms remain intentionally standardized — flexible, powered and adaptable to different teaching formats — all other spaces have a strong identity. No two are alike. Each one has its own name, its own atmosphere, its own character.

This approach reflects a clear intention: to create differentiated environments that support a range of uses, strengthen student engagement and fully reflect Efrei's distinct character.

Spaces designed for the future

One of the project's key principles is bridging the gap between academic and professional environments. The goal: to prepare students for the future of work while offering a stimulating setting.

“We wanted students to work in spaces similar to the ones they'll experience in the workplace. Places where they can collaborate, focus and engage informally.”

PEGGY BLANCHIN, HEAD OF REAL ESTATE AT EFREI

Bold colors, varied furniture and material contrasts all contribute to the overall experience. Some design choices were even kept secret to create a real sense of surprise when the building opened.

“Today, we are fully satisfied with the outcome and with how these spaces are used day to day by everyone — students, faculty and administrative staff,” adds Peggy Blanchin.

A campus in tune with new student expectations

Opened in January 2026, New Republic was immediately embraced by its users. A satisfaction survey confirms this initial impression: users feel heard and valued. Sports spaces, the large cafeteria, the variety of booths and coworking areas are among the most appreciated features.

For Efrei's director, the project reflects a broader transformation in higher education:

“Student expectations have evolved significantly. They are looking for spaces that are more inspiring and more versatile. Schools must adapt by offering open, welcoming environments that foster engagement.”

FRÉDÉRIC MEUNIER, DIRECTOR OF L'EFREI

Making design a driver of transformation

Efrei is already working on new projects, including a campus in Bordeaux, building on the lessons learned from this project.

Above all, New Republic demonstrates how design can support a long-term strategic vision.

“This building shows how space can become a true educational tool. When designed in close alignment with a school's vision, it supports different ways of working and learning, strengthens a sense of belonging and enables future transformations.”

FAUSTINE GRANGE, ACCOUNT MANAGER AT STEELCASE

New Republic reflects a clear ambition: to create an environment capable of evolving alongside teaching practices, student expectations and changes in higher education. A project that positions the campus as a long-term asset for engagement and transformation.