

‘Seeking out roots is a healing journey to affirm one’s existence’

Lee Jae-dong, president of Korean Roots Association in France, ‘It is time to create global adoptee solidarity network that transcends nationalities’

Lee Jae-dong (French name: Laurent Dumoulin, 43), president of the Korean Roots Association in France (Racines Coreennes), who visited his homeland to attend the 2025 World Korean Adoptee Conference hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency, candidly shared his thoughts on adoptees in an interview with Yonhap News on Nov. 13.

A web designer and graphic specialist, he is revitalizing the stagnant association to restore the adoptee community's identity and open a new chapter in cultural exchanges between Korea and France. The Korean Roots Association, established in 1995, is France's first organization for Korean adoptees. Approximately 12,000 Korean adoptees reside in France, the largest such community in Europe. The association partners with organizations like the OKA and the National Center for the Rights of the Child (NCRC) to support adoptees' return to Korea, provide guidance on F-4 (Overseas Korean) visas, offer Korean language education and assist in family reunification. It serves as a bridge enabling adoptees to engage with Korean culture and share their lives with one another.

“About 10 to 15 percent of our members have found their biological families in Korea,” Lee said. “This is not merely a reunion but a healing journey to affirm the meaning of one’s existence.”

He himself met his biological parents and three half-siblings in 2019 with the help of the NCRC and the French foreign ministry.

“The moment I reunited with my family, it felt like everything was healed,” he recalled.

Elected as the 11th president last year, he said: “The association faced a crisis due to a lack of participation from the younger generation. I wanted to inject new vitality through fresh projects.”

Leveraging his specialties, he personally oversaw all visual content, including website redesign, promotional material design and social media content creation. His efforts bore fruit. The association regained its vitality through diverse activities: online Korean language classes, founding a choir, Korean food experience programs like “kimbap” workshops, Chuseok and Seollal events, and joint events with the Korean Embassy, Hangeul schools, women’s associations and international student associations.

The network has expanded across France, and its 30th anniversary event in May was a great success, drawing over 400



Lee Jae-dong (French name: Laurent Dumoulin), president of the Korean Roots Association in France (Racines Coreennes)

attendees.

“As a member of the inaugural Global Future Generation Summit committee organized by the OKA, I am creating policy connections to help young adoptees gain academic and entrepreneurial opportunities in Korea,” he said. “The next generation of adoptees is not a generation looking only to the past. They are a global generation designing their future through Korea.”

His activities are also drawing attention in France. He is working to improve systems, such as transparency in adoption procedures, record preservation and support for family reunions in collaboration with the French Foreign Ministry’s International Adoption Mission.

“We are not simply adoptees. We are people building a cultural bridge between Korea and France. This blend of identities enriches us.” His words were full of conviction.

Lee is currently envisioning an integrated project encompassing all adoptees in France. He plans to create a platform where adoptees can discuss identity, family and social solidarity, transcending nationality and origin.

“We are Korean adoptees and members of the global adoptee community. Now is the time to build a Global Adoptee Solidarity Network, where people with different roots can empathize with one another.” 장