

FRANCO-GERMAN COOPERATION AT THE HEART OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

With the Elysée Treaty signed on 22 January 1963, General de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer provided momentum and set out, for their own peoples and more generally for all of Europe, a roadmap and a compelling vision for the future. At a time when the European Union has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, we must recognise that, fifty years after it was signed, this treaty remains indispensable to the building of Europe. In this context, the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Franco-German friendship should be seen as an opportunity for France and Germany to carry out a clear and uncompromising assessment of their cooperation and to set out the path to be taken in order to deepen their relationship and to meet the challenges facing the European Union.

UNPARALLELED DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

The strength of Franco-German cooperation is that it is based on a wide range of instruments which form a unique network and facilitate trade.

▶ SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- The political dialogue between the French and German leaders has never been self-imposed, but it has always helped overcome differences.
- The partnership between France and Germany has never been rigid, but has constantly evolved: to cope with major changes, such as the implosion of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany; and to meet new challenges.

The Franco-German entente is anchored at the heart of the societies and the economic, social and cultural lives of both countries: no partnership in the world has achieved such intensity and such a degree of organisation.

▶ AN EXTREMELY COMPREHENSIVE

INSTITUTIONAL NETWORK WHICH IS BASED ON:

1. **Large structures for bilateral consultation at the highest level**
2. **Partnerships with multiple stakeholders:**

- the Franco-German Youth Office with more than 8 million French young people who have participated in some 300,000 programmes;
- the three Franco-German lycées (secondary schools) at Saarbrücken, Freiburg and Buc, the fifteen AEFÉ (Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger - Agency for French Teaching Abroad) establishments, the Franco-German University with a network of 169 higher education establishments;
- the Franco-German channel "Arte";
- the numerous private stakeholders invested in collaborations which are sometimes long-standing and institutionalised: twinning of towns, départements or regions,

partnerships between French and German firms, between trade unions, agricultural organisations, chambers of commerce and industry, trades and crafts

There are 2,281 twinings between France and Germany, compared to 1,065 Franco-British and 881 Franco-Italian twinings.

Germany is France's main customer and leading supplier. It is the second-ranked foreign employer in France.



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▶ A LEADING ROLE IN EUROPEAN PROGRESS

France and Germany have made significant contributions to:

- the current institutional architecture of the European Union;
- the economic integration process;
- the creation of a common foreign and security policy and the adoption of the Franco-German approach to security and defense.

The Franco-German preferences for a balanced model for economic growth or for a social market economy have profoundly influenced the direction of Europe.

PERSPECTIVE: RENEWED COOPERATION

The entente between the two countries, while not exclusive, is a necessity which has always allowed them to show leadership, while making the best use, through dialogue and pragmatism, of what unites them.

▶ REINVIGORATING THE DIALOGUE

- The Franco-German Agenda 2020, adopted on 4 February 2010, is the framework for the development of Franco-German cooperation in the current decade.
- Among the key points, the following should be noted: priority to be given to sustainable growth based on research, innovation and competitiveness; energy; the development of bilingual curricula; the embedding of the relationship in French and German society by bringing citizens closer together.

▶ THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE HEART OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP

We must reinvigorate the European project in a renewed political vision which places its citizens, and in particular young people, at the forefront.

The euro crisis was a powerful indicator of a deeply rooted institutional, political and democratic crisis. The challenge to be confronted is daunting, given that people are concerned about the future of the European edifice and also about their own futures.

The Franco-German dialogue, extended to all member states wishing to move in the same direction, will be at the heart of the issues and the decisions to be taken.

▶ The political and democratic deepening of the European Union

1. ***The debate surrounding ways and means of deepening the European Union is inseparable from a longer term political vision***
2. ***The challenge is twofold for Europe:***

- the reform of its institutions based around the transfer of skills in a process of shared sovereignty and in the context of remodelled fora which have more democratic legitimacy;
- the mobilisation and commitment of civil society in laying out a course which will restore a political outlook embodied in projects and areas of solidarity and proximity which are meaningful and which hold promise for the future.

▶ Economic and financial governance

The objective for both countries is also twofold:

- the deepening of the project relating to economic and financial governance;
- the implementation of the Growth and Employment Pact in the light of rising unemployment, inequality and insecurity in Europe.

« Franco-German cooperation is not an end in itself; this relationship is at the service of all our partners and of the construction of Europe, to make us stronger in a world in which we are assailed from all sides [...] »

Mr. Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, French Ambassador to Germany