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Deutsches Institut für  
Entwicklungspolitik



German Development  
Institute

**IDDRI**



Key results of  
a joint IDDRI & DIE workshop on  
**French-German cooperation towards global development**

Paris, 21 June 2018

### Main Takeaways

- ➔ There is a **momentum** for intensifying cooperation between the two countries on international development issues: France and Germany have announced a new Élysée treaty including a chapter on global development. This initiative might create momentum in a phase of shrinking possibilities for multilateralism.
- ➔ France and Germany have a long history and institutionalized forms of cooperation, which include global development and development cooperation. Currently, cooperation is driven to some extent by political events but also by increasingly converging political priorities. Which strategies best serve those priorities in the long run deserves more debate. The current moment and window of opportunity for Franco-German collaboration should be used towards a **more strategic** approach.
- ➔ Cooperation of France and Germany should continue to follow a flexible approach inclusive for **other partners**. The collaboration of both countries should be used as a leverage for new initiatives in support of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the same time, any joint Germany and France initiative in support of global development needs to have more partners. It needs to be clear then whether cooperation is primarily about making French/German activities more effective or about promoting global development efforts also by others.
- ➔ The flexible format of the Sahel Alliance can serve in this regard as an example. Beside France and Germany, it includes the European Union as a driving force and further partners like the World Bank and UNDP.
- ➔ Cooperation between both countries should be enhanced **both from a EU-wide perspective**, providing evidence-based answers to the challenges now facing the EU, and from the broad perspective of delivering on the **Agenda 2030**. It requires clarifying how this translates into new joint initiatives and strategic cooperation decisions by the two countries, the bottom line being that cooperation of France and Germany should continue to be flexible and inclusive for other partner countries.

### 1. Background

On June 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and Institut du Développement Durable et des Relations Internationales / Institut d'études politiques de Paris (IDDRI) convened a workshop with French and German experts on global development and development cooperation. The purpose was to discuss the options and added value of intensifying French and German collaboration towards jointly promoting the Agenda 2030, in particular in the field of international development cooperation.

Participants included representatives from various ministries (French Treasury, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs MEAE and German Ministry for Development and Economic Cooperation BMZ), development agencies, (Agence Française pour le Développement AFD, German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau KfW); OECD; as well as researchers from DIE, IDDRI and Fondation pour les Études et Recherches sur le Développement International FERDI.

Discussions concerned how France and Germany cooperate, and could improve doing so, from a broad EU foreign policy perspective as well as regarding specific areas and practices of cooperation, including the Sahel alliance as a concrete joint initiative, and institutional cooperation between AFD and KfW.

## 2. There is a momentum for intensifying cooperation

The conveners offered an initial assessment of the context in which intensified cooperation by France and Germany may make a difference. Aspects included that in a world of returning nationalism, multilateralism and the system of multilateral development cooperation are under threat. The EU itself is being challenged in many ways. Against the background of current US policies and Brexit, many international actors are looking at France and Germany as potential sources of global development leadership.

Some new momentum for this can in fact be observed, as exemplified by the Macron/Merkel [announcement](#) that the [Élysée treaty](#) should be renewed and re-launched by the end of 2018, including a section on global development and development cooperation. At the same time, alliances of actors of global development have generally become more flexible, which provides a different context for the consideration of French-German cooperation and joint leadership.

In this light, the conveners invited first answers to two main questions: First, which are agendas, platforms or tracks of global policy-making that an initiative for intensified French-German cooperation might *hook into and contribute to*, in order to promote the Agenda 2030? Which upcoming opportunities of joint leadership or of programs and initiatives lend themselves to this? Second, *which evidence* is there for the value that such French-German cooperation adds, or might add?

## 3. Cooperation between French and German already happening but not enough at a strategic level

It was observed on one hand that there is a *frequent and regular exchange* between France and Germany officials, for instance between the ministries of external affairs (MEAE, France) and development (BMZ, Germany). Very often, the interests converge and the two countries speak with *one voice* on important topics. A concrete example of coordinating priorities was the joint production of a "Road Map of Development" based on six priority issues and of various non-papers. Moreover, there are institutionalized exchanges (e.g. of staff) and as well as ad hoc cooperation in the context of concrete development programs in partner countries.

In this light the assessment was that, on the levels of both policy and practice, cooperation on global development of the two countries is there even on a daily basis. At the same time, a recurring impression was that coordination and cooperation are *event-driven* and lack a strategic dimension that would coherently translate between those two levels. The idea of a *missing middle* between a common narrative for France-Germany closer cooperation on international affairs laid out at top government level, and day-to-day practical cooperation taking place at a lower institutional level was repeatedly taken up. In this view there are often a consensus on a relatively high level of political priorities and compatible practices on the lower level of implementation, but the debate of concrete strategies (between those two levels) for realising such priorities and coordination beyond ad hoc opportunities were perceived to be rare.

The Sahel joint initiative was one of these rare examples where a narrative, a strategy and an implementation plan coalesced to change the course of action. One conclusion from this observation was that it is easy to cooperate among already like-minded parties and on an abstract level, while deeper cooperation might involve tougher *choices* on content, direction, and labour division. This would render cooperation also a more political endeavour.

## 4. Strategic potential of French-German cooperation in concrete examples

**Migration.** Regarding migration, one assessment was that within the EU context important decisions are still being taken at member state level. In both France and Germany political priority is high. At the same time, in a highly politicised situation there is a de facto focus on symptoms rather than causes, which inhibits a long-term strategic focus. In view of the considerable fragmentation of ODA-financed interventions aiming to address the assumed root causes of migration, dedicated efforts to promoting joint efforts and division of labour in relation to available evidence on ODA-migration relationships could be considered.

The topic of migration raised viewpoints indeed beyond French-German cooperation. It was suggested that a long-term response should include *adapting narratives of the migration issue to reality*. This might allow for, and enable political support for, a different approach to ODA allocation in this regard. For instance, regional, often cyclical, migration in Africa is a long-established practice. Further efforts should be made towards taking

these realities into account when designing new development cooperation interventions. It was observed that many interventions today are based on theories of change that assume that stability and economic opportunities reduces human mobility, with ample research showing otherwise. Related to this, dominant narratives assume migration to be directly related to levels of poverty, whereas in reality a decision to migrate or not tends to be based on a complex combination of motives.

**Sahel alliance.** Under the impetus of France and Germany, this alliance was launched on 13 July 2017. It brings together main development partners of the Sahel States, in order to strengthen coordination and make assistance more rapid, more effective and better targeted. The alliance was discussed as a case of relative success, considering that Germany (to the surprise of some) joint an initiative in which France played a key role and to which both countries have different but compatible approaches. This relative success was attributed to various factors, including basic agreement on goals, priorities and indicators, a labour division among donor parties in terms of sectors, and – importantly – the availability of funds and the existence of necessary instruments. One challenge identified was that Sahel countries show a somewhat limited ownership of the policies and programs that the alliance promotes. There is a need to become operational, make things happen on the ground and produce tangible results beyond the political level, and a need to better collaborate with the G5 Sahel countries' ministries, also to avoid that these shift the blame for weak governance to donors.

A conclusion related to the last point but more specifically concerning France and Germany was that these two could keep up the agenda of political change, in a situation where new actors are joining the alliance. The latter means that coordination becomes trickier and riskier. Moreover, these actors by and large bring in a more technical approach and a more narrow focus on results. This might undermine the ambition of promoting also political and institutional change within the Sahel countries as well as the active involvement of these countries' governments and public sectors; it is because of this ambition that the alliance has been perceived as revitalization of the aid effectiveness agenda. Working with what countries are able to contribute and intensifying the local presence of the alliance and the interfaces with the Sahel countries was mentioned as one way of promoting these countries' ownership.

**North Africa.** The third example was cooperation of France and Germany in North Africa. In line with the initial assessment of overlapping views and priorities of the two countries, it was suggested that despite different relationships with the region, France and Germany do have common interests there. At the same time, an important difference was seen in France being more interested and active than Germany in promoting change in the political situation. Whether stronger involvement of Germany on a political level would be in the interest of France and contribute to French-German cooperation was not clear; president Macron's initiative to revitalize the 5+5 initiative (5 Mediterranean and 5 Southern European countries) does not include Germany. Beyond overlapping interests, there is a lack of clear and explicit strategies of both countries towards the region that could be aligned and which then might even influence European strategy with regards to North Africa. In Germany, it is not clear whether the ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Development Cooperation are on the same page; in France, it is not clear whether MEAE has (received) a clear policy direction. This lack of strategy might explain why to date cooperation of France and Germany is relatively ad hoc in this region.

## **5. Finding the right level of cooperation and involving further allies will be key**

The two countries have various channels of regular interaction and coordination. The two ministries meet annually in Paris or Berlin. Staff exchanges of AFD and KfW are well established between strategy departments and are now being extended to other departments. Some system similarities were also discussed. The fact that both France and Germany (and also Japan) implement ODA through bilateral development banks occasionally makes them natural allies (e.g. in DAC negotiations), not least because as banks they face similar changes e.g. in the global financial system and development finance. Technical cooperation (TC) of both countries, on the other hand, used to be similar but nowadays there are considerable differences. While in Germany various agencies of TC were transformed into GIZ, French TC has been reduced to 350 staff (compared to some 20.000 at GIZ, including local staff).

Cooperation of France and Germany should continue to follow a flexible approach that is inclusive for other partners. A key question would be, "what can each of the parties bring to the table?" In this light, it seems important to distinguish whether French-German cooperation is about (i) making their own development

activities more effective for global development through cooperation *among* the two, or about (ii) leadership towards global development going *beyond* the two countries' activities, and whether the latter would mean (ii.a) taking the *lead* e.g. in the EU, in alliances such as the Sahel alliance etc. or (ii.b) acting as *broker* and integrating force among various actors or (ii.c) promoting a more general renewal of *multilateralism*, even if this means that French and German priorities are only two out of many.

This point is even more vital in light of the fact that intensifying French/German leadership within the EU context may not please everyone. Also since Brexit, and while it is not yet clear how the UK can be kept as another key player key of European development policy, French/German initiative may require careful consideration of how other countries evaluate this within overall power relations among European states.

The point also adds to the more general assessment that, as a platform and amplifier for French/German leadership for global development, the *EU leadership in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 may not be a low-hanging fruit*. While the idea is plausible, there are reasons for why there has been limited cooperation towards European initiatives in the past. These include different historical experiences, different key partners for cooperation within the EU (France more with Southern countries, Germany more with Northern Europe), and more generally the difference of France being more of a 'global power' including in the UN security council and Germany acting more as a 'civilian power'. Even in current examples like the post-Cotonou negotiations, there are divergences in important respects. Closer French-German cooperation in the field of development policy calls for an assessment of these differences to analyze if and how they should be overcome.

Summary by

Fabian Scholtes/Stephan Klingebiel,  
German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für  
Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)

Elisabeth Hege/Tancrède Voituriez, Institut du développement  
durable et des relations internationales / Institut d'études  
politiques de Paris (IDDRI)