



# GERMANY AND FRANCE

## HALF A CENTURY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION

*"...no greater, finer, or more useful Plan has ever occupied the human mind than the one of a perpetual and universal Peace among all the Peoples of Europe."*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), French philosopher and writer

Their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers clashed on the battlefield, where they looked into the mouth of hell. Their families suffered hardship, bereavement, destruction, bombardment, occupation and in some cases deportation to the Nazi death camps. Whenever defeated, their nations endured the traumatic humiliations imposed by the victors. They learned to foster a culture of revenge.

So it was that for 75 years, from 1870 until 1945, the middle of the European continent lived in the shadow of the confrontation between its neighbouring and rival powers: France and Germany. Each had become the other's hereditary foe. A vicious cycle of obsessive distrust and hatred had taken hold.

That enmity fed into three bloody conflicts: the Franco-German War of 1870/1871 and the two World

Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945). The cost was immeasurable. More than 70 million people were killed in Europe and around the world, 13 million of them in Germany and France. The bloodletting and devastation left Europe on its knees.

Yet it was amid the still-smouldering ruins of these tragic events that the course of history was reversed. After the Second World War, Franco-German reconciliation became the motivation for reconstructing Europe as a peaceful edifice.

In Paris on 22 January 1963, the Élysée Treaty officially set the seal on those intentions.

That was 50 years ago.

It was the symbolic beginning of a completely unprecedented history of friendship and cooperation between states and nations.





# OPTING FOR PEACE

## 1945-1963

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Dresden after the bombing (1945), Dresden today

Nazi Germany submitted its unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945, bringing an end to the Second World War in Europe. The victorious powers split the demoralized and physically devastated Germany into four occupation zones. France was one of those powers and pursued a particularly tough occupation policy to prevent any resurgence of German might.

In 1949, the Cold War triggered the partition of Germany, which was becoming the front line in the confrontation between East and West. This lent impetus to the Federal Republic's integration into Western structures, notably within Europe. On 9 May 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman formulated a proposal that was to lay the foundations of the future, suggesting that German and French coal and steel production be placed under a common High Authority. War between the former enemies was now physically impossible, and the process of European integration had begun.

Alongside these developments, a number of forward-looking thinkers were forming the building blocks of rapprochement between the societies of France and Germany. As early as 1945, these pioneers had understood that peace would come as a result of better mutual understanding and the well-supported establishment of a democratic Germany. Their activities increased throughout the 1950s, with meetings, joint publications and town twinnings helping to spread the spirit of mediation.

That rapprochement started to turn into reconciliation as of 1958, under the influence of General de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. A genuine friendship developed between the one-time Resistance leader who had become President of the French Republic and the Christian-Democrat, pro-European Chancellor with an anti-Nazi past. The two sides' interests did the rest. On 22 January 1963, France and Germany signed the Élysée Treaty, putting the official seal on the reconciliation.



# CONSIGNING HATE TO THE PAST PIONEERS AND PEACE-MAKERS

To begin with, there were no more than a handful of them. Intellectuals, journalists, writers, civil servants, trade unionists, clergymen or youth workers, many had a background in religion, both Catholic and Protestant, or in Resistance circles. Some were former soldiers, concentration camp inmates or prisoners of war.

From 1945 and right on through the 1950s, these individuals worked to bring German and French people closer together. Their ideas may not have had a direct impact on politics, but they helped gradually change prevalent mindsets.

Franco-German rapprochement thus took root in civil society after the Second World War before gaining a political dimension.



“Invalides”, a caricature by Bertall on the Franco-German War of 1870/1871, published in the satirical magazine *Le Grelot* on 13 August 1871.

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## THE ADVENT OF TOWN TWINNING: RECONCILIATION FROM THE BOTTOM UP

In 1950, Montbéliard and Ludwigsburg became the first Franco-German pair of towns to be twinned. It took courage to enact this plan only five years after the war, but as Montbéliard’s Mayor Lucien Tharradin put it,

*“You can’t build anything on hate.” “Who will still dare to deny that we need to make peace with one another? To live with our fingers permanently poised on our triggers, ready to engulf the world in flames, is no way for two nations to exist.”*

### JOSEPH ROVAN

“THE GERMANY THAT WE DESERVE”

*“The more our enemies have disfigured the face of humanity, the more we must respect it, even embellish it, in them. [...] Tomorrow’s Germany will reflect what we have been worthy of.”*

**Joseph Rován, former concentration camp inmate**

Translated extract from an article published in French magazine *Esprit* on 1 October 1945, when France was pursuing its very tough occupation policy in Germany

### ALFRED GROSSER

IS IT RIGHT TO SPEAK OF “RECONCILIATION”?

According to Professor Alfred Grosser, political scientist, historian, sociologist and pioneer of Franco-German rapprochement, *“Franco-German rapprochement made sense with respect to the war of 1914-1918. That conflict was a clash between two nations.”* In contrast, 1945 was the triumph of free peoples over the Nazi regime. *“There was certainly no call for reconciliation with Germans whom Hitler had imprisoned; once Nazism had been defeated, what we wanted was to work with them to make a post-war Germany they could identify with.”*



Professor Alfred Grosser (born in 1925)

© Picture-alliance / Sven Simon



# EUROPE – BOUND TOGETHER BY A COMMON DESTINY

Throughout the 1950s, Franco-German reconciliation was synonymous with European integration, which germinated as the Cold War took hold.

It all started in 1950 with an incredibly bold proposition – to pool mining and steel production. This was a move that would effectively preclude any prospect of Franco-German war. Couched in the idea of federalization, the project came out of Jean Monnet’s reflections on the future of Europe. In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) laid the foundation stone of European integration.

With France and Germany forming the core, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy gathered around them. These six signed the Treaties of Rome on 25 March 1957 to establish the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom. The EEC created a common market in which goods could circulate freely.

Europe was making tangible progress. The issue of its political architecture, however, remained unresolved. France put forward a proposal for political union in 1960, but it was not taken up.



Konrad Adenauer (l.), Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi (r.)

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## THE FOUNDING ACT: THE SCHUMAN DECLARATION

*“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity. The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. [...]*

*With this aim in view, the French Government proposes that action be taken immediately [...] It proposes that Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole be placed under a common High Authority, within the framework of an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.*

*[...] The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.”*

Declaration by Robert Schuman,  
French Foreign Minister, 9 May 1950



The Treaties of Rome were signed on 25 March 1957.

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# TWO VISIONARIES

## CHARLES DE GAULLE AND KONRAD ADENAUER

A MEETING OF MINDS BETWEEN  
TWO MEN AND, THROUGH THEM,  
BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES



General de Gaulle's speech to the youth of Germany  
in Ludwigsburg, September 1962

### DE GAULLE'S PRAISE FOR GERMANY AS A "GREAT NATION"

In the course of his official visit to Germany from 4 to 9 September 1962, General de Gaulle, the personification of France's anti-Nazi Resistance, honoured the Germans as a "*great nation*", mostly speaking German when he did so. He reaped delighted applause from the crowds.

*"I furthermore congratulate you on being young Germans, on being the children of a great nation. Yes, a great nation – which has at times, during the course of its history, committed grave errors. But a nation too from which great wealth – intellectual, scientific, artistic, philosophical – has swept across the world; a nation which has enriched us all with the products of its inventiveness, its technology, its labour; a nation that has demonstrated, both in its peacetime endeavours and amid the suffering of war, deep, rich seams of courage, discipline and organization."*

Speech to the youth of Germany,  
Ludwigsburg, 9 September 1962

When General de Gaulle returned to office in 1958, Chancellor Adenauer at first feared that the President's strong attachment to French independence might weaken the fledgling European project.

Then, on 14 September, de Gaulle invited the German Chancellor to join him in more intimate surroundings at his private residence in Colombey-les-deux-Églises. Similar in their humility and love of culture, the two heads of state found themselves brought together by mutual respect and shared convictions. Their interpreter, Hermann Kusterer, would later describe it as a meeting of minds between two men and, through them, between two countries.

In 1962, de Gaulle and Adenauer enacted that relationship during official visits to one another's countries. They made symbolic gestures and solemn declarations, from a reconciliation Mass in Reims Cathedral to de Gaulle's speech inviting the "*great nation*" of Germany to help build Franco-German friendship and the future of Europe.

It was thanks to this shared political will, along with the context of the Cold War encouraging westward integration, and the interests of both sides, that the Élysée Treaty was signed.



General de Gaulle (l.) and  
Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (r.)



Chancellor Adenauer in Reims, 8 July 1962



# THE RECONCILIATION TREATY

## 1963

General de Gaulle now wanted to perpetuate the solemn, sacred reconciliation he and Chancellor Adenauer had pledged in Reims and Germany in 1962. On 22 January 1963, they signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation in Paris, in the Salon Murat of the Élysée Palace. This set the seal on the reconciliation process; it provided a concrete base on which France and Germany could develop their friendly, cooperative relations. A joint declaration issued at the time underlines the treaty's historic significance.

In 1963, the Élysée Treaty was not yet the founding act that it has since become. It was an achievement, certainly – the fruit of years of effort to bring the two societies closer together and, above all, of the political will voiced by de Gaulle and Adenauer. Nonetheless, it was for the most part a product of the circumstances and interests of its time.

For Germany, the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 had galvanized support for partnership with France.

For France, the failure of de Gaulle's Fouchet Plan for political union in early 1962 became an incentive to try and do with Germany alone what had proved impossible to achieve with all six EEC states.

Now considered the keystone of all Franco-German cooperation, the treaty at first looked set to be forgotten. It would be some years before the mechanisms it established started to wield their powerful effect at a level beyond temporary circumstance.



© French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Élysée Treaty was signed on 22 January 1963.



# FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION – OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

In a joint declaration to accompany the treaty, Adenauer and de Gaulle highlighted the status of Franco-German reconciliation as *“a historic event which profoundly transforms the relations between the two peoples”*.

They added that *“increased cooperation between the two countries constitutes an indispensable stage on the way to a united Europe, which is the aim of the two peoples”*.

The treaty established how Franco-German cooperation was to be organized, particularly by enshrining an obligation for regular political coordination. It covered the three areas of foreign affairs, defence, and education and young people. Economic relations and cultural affairs, which had been at the heart of previous bilateral and European agreements, were not mentioned.



Chancellor Adenauer (l.) and General de Gaulle (r.) signed the Élysée Treaty in Paris on 22 January 1963.

© Picture-alliance / united archives

## THE SUBSTANCE OF THE TREATY – MORE A METHOD THAN A SET OF GOALS

Next to giving the two countries' young people a central role by enshrining the idea of exchanges, the treaty principally served to institute regular consultation between Paris and Bonn (later Berlin). It set schedules for meetings at various levels:

- The heads of state and government were to meet whenever required and in principle at least twice a year.
- The foreign ministers were to meet at least once every three months.
- Alternating between Bonn and Paris, monthly meetings were to be held for **high-level political, economic and cultural affairs officials from the two foreign ministries** to review current issues and prepare the ministerial meetings. **The embassies and consulates** would furthermore set up all the necessary contacts for addressing issues which affected both countries.
- The defence ministers were to meet at least once every three months, as were those responsible for **education and cultural policy**.
- Meetings between the **army chiefs of staff** were to be held at least once every two months.
- Those responsible for **policy on youth and family affairs** were to meet at least once every two months.

The treaty also provided for this cooperation to be evaluated on a regular basis.



© Federal Foreign Office

The Élysée Treaty



# YOUTHFUL ENERGY TO DRIVE NEW GROWTH

The declaration attached to the treaty called on young people to play “a decisive role in the consolidation of Franco-German friendship”. The hope was that younger generations, people who had not lived through those three fratricidal wars, would lead the way in building the new Franco-German relationship.

THE TREATY CALLED ON YOUNG PEOPLE  
TO PLAY “A DECISIVE ROLE IN THE  
CONSOLIDATION OF FRANCO-GERMAN  
FRIENDSHIP”



© FGVO

Young German and French cyclists meeting under the auspices of a town twinning programme in the 1960s



© FGVO

A youth camp organized by the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO) in 1964

This was to be achieved by having young people meet, speak to each other and come to appreciate one another, investing time and energy in shared activities. So it was that, on the back of the Élysée Treaty, the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO) was created on 5 July 1963.

But would meetings alone be enough? The initial project certainly turned out to have been somewhat idealistic. It was quickly improved, however, thanks to thorough-going review of its educational ideas. Active, inventive and committed, the FGYO little by little developed innovative strategies and tools for encouraging exchange between French and German children, adolescents, school pupils, students and young professionals. To date, it has enabled more than eight million young people from France and Germany to get to know each other.



# A NEW BEGINNING?

At first, the Élysée Treaty did not spark any new progress.

When the act to ratify it was put to the vote in the German Bundestag on 15 June 1963, the Members included a preamble reaffirming that the Federal Republic of Germany's goals remained unchanged, especially that of maintaining *"the close partnership between Europe and the United States of America"*.

De Gaulle had just reiterated his independence vis-à-vis Washington, notably on the subject of UK membership of the EEC – so he was sorely disappointed. In a moment of pique, he said, *"Treaties are like roses and young girls – they last while they last."*

Chancellor Adenauer, now aged 87, was replaced in October 1963 by Ludwig Erhard. Paris and Bonn diverged on whether Europe would ideally be an intergovernmental or a supranational structure. The European project had come to a standstill. The meetings laid down by the treaty carried on being held, but its ambitions for foreign policy and defence evaporated.



General de Gaulle (l.) and Chancellor Ludwig Erhard (r.) in Bonn on 21 July 1966

## OF TREATIES AND ROSES

Chancellor Adenauer had a response to General de Gaulle's annoyance at the preamble Germany had added to its ratification act:

*"[...] I know my stuff when it comes to roses. The hardiest ones are those with the most thorns. This friendship between France and Germany is like a rose bush that will always produce new buds and bloom again. [...] If it weren't for that friendship, any attempt to create this Europe would be doomed from the start."*

*"You are quite right, Chancellor," replied de Gaulle. "Our treaty is not a rose, nor even a rose bush, but a rose garden. A single rose soon wilts – but a rose garden, if tended well, can last forever."*



The German Bundestag voted on 15 June 1963 to pass the act ratifying the Élysée Treaty. The Members also approved the addition of a preamble.



# AN ENGINE TO DRIVE EUROPE FORWARDS

## 1969-1989



© Picture-alliance / dpa

President François Mitterrand (l.) and Chancellor Helmut Kohl (r.)

Franco-German cooperation got back under way in 1969 with President Pompidou and Chancellor Brandt. The principle of regular coordination began proving its worth, with the two leaders getting to know one another, coming to understand one another and starting to anticipate one another's opinions.

It was in 1974, when President Giscard d'Estaing and Chancellor Schmidt took the reins, that the method really came into its own. Both were former finance ministers, they were friends, and they shared the same assessment of the monetary problems that were assailing the world at the time. They worked out joint solutions together, laying the foundations of future European monetary union. Europe moved forward step by step. To take one example, the European Council came to mirror at the European level what these two leaders had been maintaining bilaterally.

Europe's Franco-German "engine" was born.

While the faces changed, the driving force remained the same. In 1983, President Mitterrand travelled to the Bundestag to express his solidarity with Germany in the face of the Soviet Euromissiles. It was a gesture that Chancellor Kohl would not forget. Linked by their love of history and their tragic experience of the war, the two men were committed to building a peaceful Europe together. The Franco-German engine was in top gear, and Europe moved full steam ahead, from the abolition of physical borders and trade barriers to the creation of the European Union (EU) and the euro.

Pompidou the Gaullist and Brandt of the Social Democrats; the Centrist Giscard d'Estaing and the Social Democrat Schmidt; Mitterrand the Socialist and Kohl of the Christian Democrats – together, they proved how little the Franco-German tandem relied on party-political allegiance for its success.



# MÉNAGE À DEUX

The 1970s saw international economic problems multiply: the Bretton Woods monetary system disintegrated, replaced by floating exchange rates, while the world was shaken by oil shocks, economic crisis and rising unemployment.

In the face of these difficulties, Germany's Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and France's President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing formed an effective, youthful tandem with a more pared-down, modern style. That is not to say that Germany and France always agreed – but their constant dialogue made progress possible.

Hélène Miard-Delacroix, professor and Franco-German relations expert at the Sorbonne, writes, *"This was one of those phases in Franco-German political relations during which the constraints imposed by the Élysée Treaty were superfluous"*.

© Picture-alliance / dpa



The "Abibac" was instituted as a Franco-German combined higher education entrance qualification.

The years 1970-1980 saw the election of a **European Parliament** by universal suffrage and the creation of the **European Space Agency (ESA)** as well as **Franco-German schools** and a **Franco-German baccalaureate**.

Franco-German coordination spread from the bilateral to the European level and onto the world stage. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt helped create the G7 to bring together the world's most industrialized countries, as well as the European Council, which would ensure regular meetings for Europe's heads of state and government.



President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (l.) and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (r.)

The "snake in the tunnel" currency band of 1972 and the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) that followed in 1978 made it possible to stabilize the currencies of Europe. These were the foundations of the future European monetary union.



The European Parliament has been elected by universal suffrage since 1979.

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# A FRESH BOOST FOR THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

President François Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl made history with a hugely powerful gesture of peace on 22 September 1984. At Verdun, a battlefield soaked in the blood of German and French combatants in the First World War, they reached out over the graves to shake hands in reconciliation.

Uniting two fervent Europeans, the Franco-German tandem gave Europe fresh impetus, working in close liaison with the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors.

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**Thanks to the Single European Act, people, goods, services and capital can circulate throughout the territory of the community as freely as they can within any one country, national borders no longer an obstacle.**



© Frédéric de La Mure / French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**President François Mitterrand (l.) and Chancellor Helmut Kohl (r.) paid homage together at Verdun, among the graves of French and German soldiers killed in the First World War, on 22 September 1984.**

AN AREA WITHOUT INTERNAL FRONTIERS IN WHICH THE FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS, PERSONS, SERVICES AND CAPITAL IS ENSURED

These efforts culminated in the Single European Act signed in 1986. This ambitious treaty changed the rules of how the European institutions worked and gave more powers to the European level so that the internal market could be completed. 1 January 1993 saw the birth of the single European market, *"an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured"*.

Having in 1983 become the first leader to invoke the Élysée Treaty, François Mitterrand was at Helmut Kohl's side to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 1988.



# EUROPE IN MICROCOSM

The cooperation that France and Germany were enjoying was open to other countries in Europe and was in many areas something of a testing ground for the European project, the microcosm at the centre of much broader collaboration.

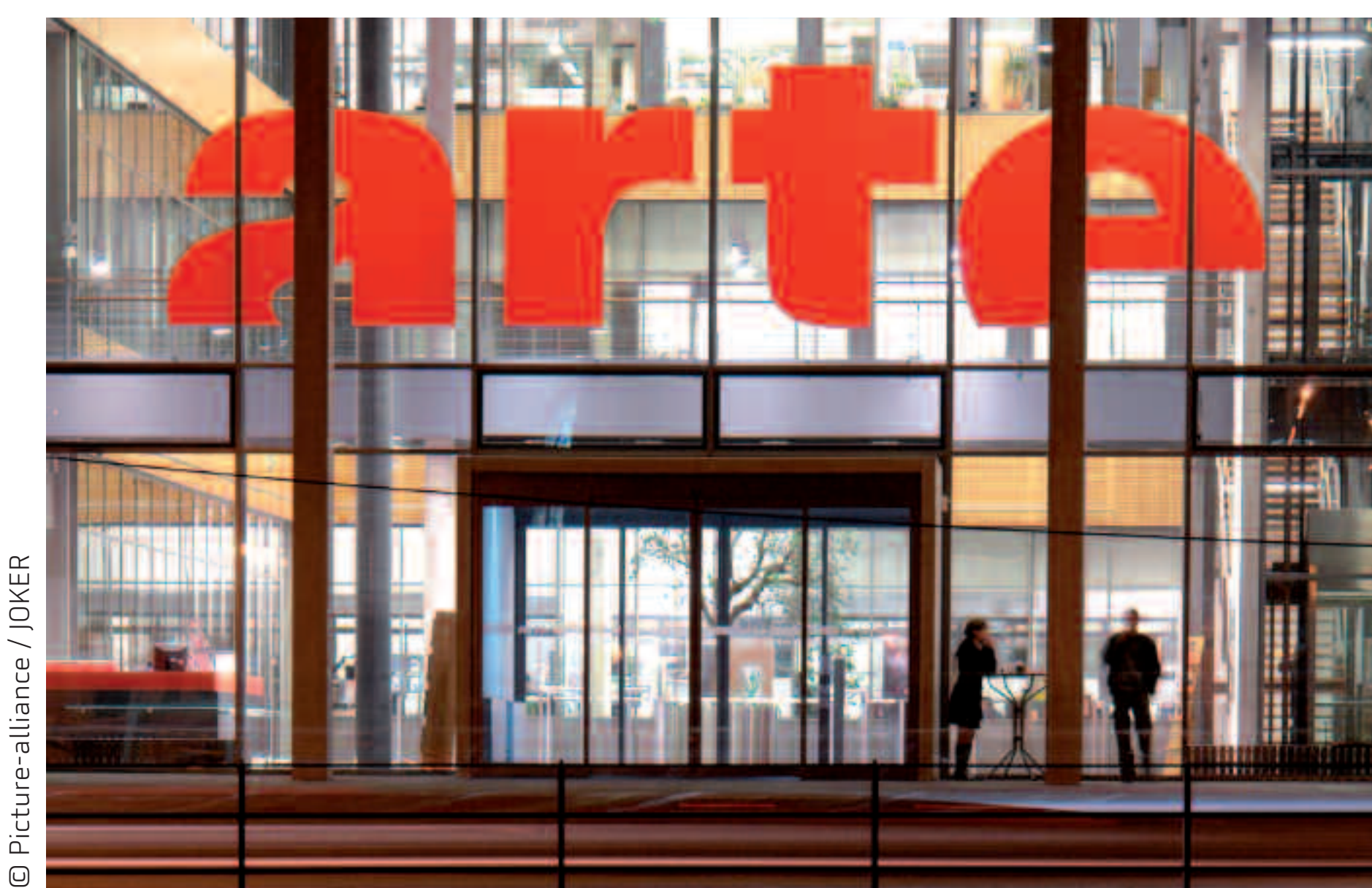
## AEROSPACE AIRBUS

Established in 1970, Airbus Industrie started out as a Franco-German industrial consortium. Opened up to the Spanish in 1971 and the British in 1979, it has been part of the EADS group since 2006. EADS, or the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company, was formed from the merger of France's Aérospatiale Matra, Germany's DaimlerChrysler Aerospace AG (DASA) and Spain's CASA. It is a global giant in the production of civil helicopters (Eurocopter), commercial aircraft (Airbus) and space-industry technology (Astrium).



© Picture-alliance / Oliver Berg

The Airbus A 380



© Picture-alliance / JOKER

ARTE headquarters in Strasbourg

## TELEVISION ARTE

The idea of a Franco-German public TV channel, broadcasting for Europe, germinated in the late 1980s. ARTE today broadcasts programmes in multiple languages from its base in Strasbourg to every corner of Europe. A regular feature is "Karambolage", a programme shown every Sunday at 9.30 p.m. which takes a humorous look at the cultural and linguistic differences between the French and Germans.

## DEFENCE THE FRANCO-GERMAN BRIGADE

Formed in 1989, the Franco-German Brigade were pioneers of European defence. Under the operational control of Eurocorps since 1993, the Brigade today comprises 5,000 servicemen and -women from France and Germany and has undertaken operations abroad in Bosnia (1997) and Afghanistan (2005). Its history is full of symbols of rediscovered peace. In 1994, the Brigade paraded along the Champs-Élysée on Bastille Day; in 2010, it saw the first German battalion stationed on French soil since the end of the Second World War.



© Picture-alliance / dpa

The Franco-German Brigade



# A NEW BALANCE AND NEW CHALLENGES

## since 1990



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The fall of the Berlin Wall, 9 November 1989

On 9 November 1989, the world order was hit by the bombshell of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The end of East-West confrontation produced a long string of consequences, from German unification in 1990 to the unification of Europe in 2004. A new, multipolar world emerged.

Reunification created a new situation for the Franco-German tandem: economically, demographically and politically, the balance had changed, and Germany had shifted geographically towards the middle of Europe. The joint response to these changes was to be a leap forward for Europe.

This visionary approach, however, could not dispel all fears and tensions. At the turn of the 21st century, the Franco-German engine found itself unable to reach compromise on how the enlarged EU should function, to say nothing of their discreetly avoided differences of opinion on the euro.

Nevertheless, the Franco-German reflex was still there. In 2003, President Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder instigated tangible steps to breathe new life into the Élysée Treaty on its 40th anniversary – to reinforce intergovernmental cooperation, institute a Franco-German Day for schools and encourage people in each country to learn the other's language.

From 2007 on, the first tandem of the post-war era was inhabited by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Nicolas Sarkozy. Together, they faced the global financial crisis, then the crisis in the eurozone, and worked to correct the latter's structural flaws. Since 2012, the Chancellor has been continuing those efforts alongside President François Hollande.



# A NEW GERMANY

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany was unified on 3 October 1990.

France watched the events unfolding next door with interest. As a legal legacy of the war, it still held a political responsibility towards Germany. French President François Mitterrand supported reunification under the leadership of Chancellor Kohl, and so did the French public, though some quarters of the French media expressed reservations.

Paris and Bonn shared a desire to link German reunification with further European integration. This process led to qualitative progress in two regards: comprehensive reform of the European institutions, which led to the birth of the European Union (EU), and the creation of an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) with a common currency. These advances are enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force in 1993.

GERMAN REUNIFICATION LED  
TO MASSIVE REFORM OF  
THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS



The Maastricht Treaty established the European Union (EU).



The fall of the Berlin Wall enabled Germany's democratic reunification.

## FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND GERMAN UNIFICATION

*"For all that, the Franco-German couple stuck together. The Chancellor and I had similar views on constructing Europe and took that ambition as the touchstone of everything we did."*

François Mitterrand,  
*De l'Allemagne. De la France*, 1996



# UNIFYING EUROPE

Chancellor Kohl repeatedly said that German and European unity were “*two sides of the same coin*”.

In the wake of German unification, the countries of East Central Europe, now freed from the Soviet yoke, sought to join the European Union, which accepted this legitimate desire.

Faced with a choice between deepening and expanding European integration, the EU decided to push ahead with both. This was an immense task. The nascent democracies of Eastern Europe had a considerable need for economic development. New debates arose: should the new Europe be moving at several different speeds? How should the institutional architecture of the new Europe – now doubled in size – look?

Faced with these challenges, the Franco-German engine stalled. Disagreements culminated at the negotiations of the Treaty of Nice in 2000. Europe was in stalemate. This untenable situation called for a top-down solution, and the project of drafting a European constitution began. Paris and Berlin took the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty as an occasion to demonstrate reinvigorated cooperation.



© Picture-alliance / ZB

**On 1 May 2004, the European Union gained ten new member states in Central and Eastern Europe.**



© Picture-alliance / ZB

**In May 2004, German and Polish school children planted trees to celebrate the enlargement of the European Union.**



© Picture-alliance / dpa

**Former foreign ministers of Poland, Germany and France, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Roland Dumas**

## THE WEIMAR TRIANGLE

Formed on 29 August 1991, shortly after the opening of the Iron Curtain, the Weimar Triangle symbolized Germany's reconciliation with its eastern and western European neighbours. It was born of a joint initiative by the German, French and Polish Foreign Ministers Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Roland Dumas and Krzysztof Skubiszewski, and aimed to strengthen dialogue among the three countries – not only at the political level, but also in civil society.



# THE EURO: SHARING A CURRENCY

The euro is in large part a product of Franco-German cooperation. Ever since the first steps towards a shared currency were taken in the 1970s, these bilateral partners have been coordinating their positions in the interests of Europe as a whole.

The euro arose from the Treaty of Maastricht. It was created in 1999, one year after the founding of the bank responsible for issuing it, the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, Germany. Europeans held euro notes and coins in their hands for the first time on 1 January 2002. Today, 17 countries use the common currency.

Since 1999 the euro has embodied European stability and prosperity. By eliminating currency trade and exchange rate issues, it has facilitated commercial trade. It has also become an important reserve currency.

But since 2010 the sovereign debt crisis has compelled European political leaders to consolidate the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). *"We have understood what makes Europe what it is: it is a community which comes together in shared responsibility"*, Chancellor Angela Merkel has said. It was for this reason that the eurozone in 2012 created the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), a permanent rescue package for future crises. The eurozone also adopted a fiscal compact envisaging better economic policy coordination among its members.

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The European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt, Germany



# A TANDEM IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

From globalization to climate change, financial crises to security threats, many challenges of the 21st century have an international dimension. Franco-German coordination often makes it possible for the two countries to defend joint positions.

In 2003, for example, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder stood apart from other European politicians with their steadfast refusal to take part in the war in Iraq.

The same year President Chirac spoke on Germany's behalf during the European Council, an unprecedented event. Chancellor Schröder later spoke on France's behalf at the United Nations.

Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy jointly called for stronger regulation of financial markets at the G20 summit in London, and later at the Copenhagen summit for a binding international climate change agreement.

In 2012 and 2013, Angela Merkel and François Hollande are underscoring the significance of Franco-German reconciliation with joint commemoration of the different steps in the historical reconciliation process in Reims, Ludwigsburg and Berlin.

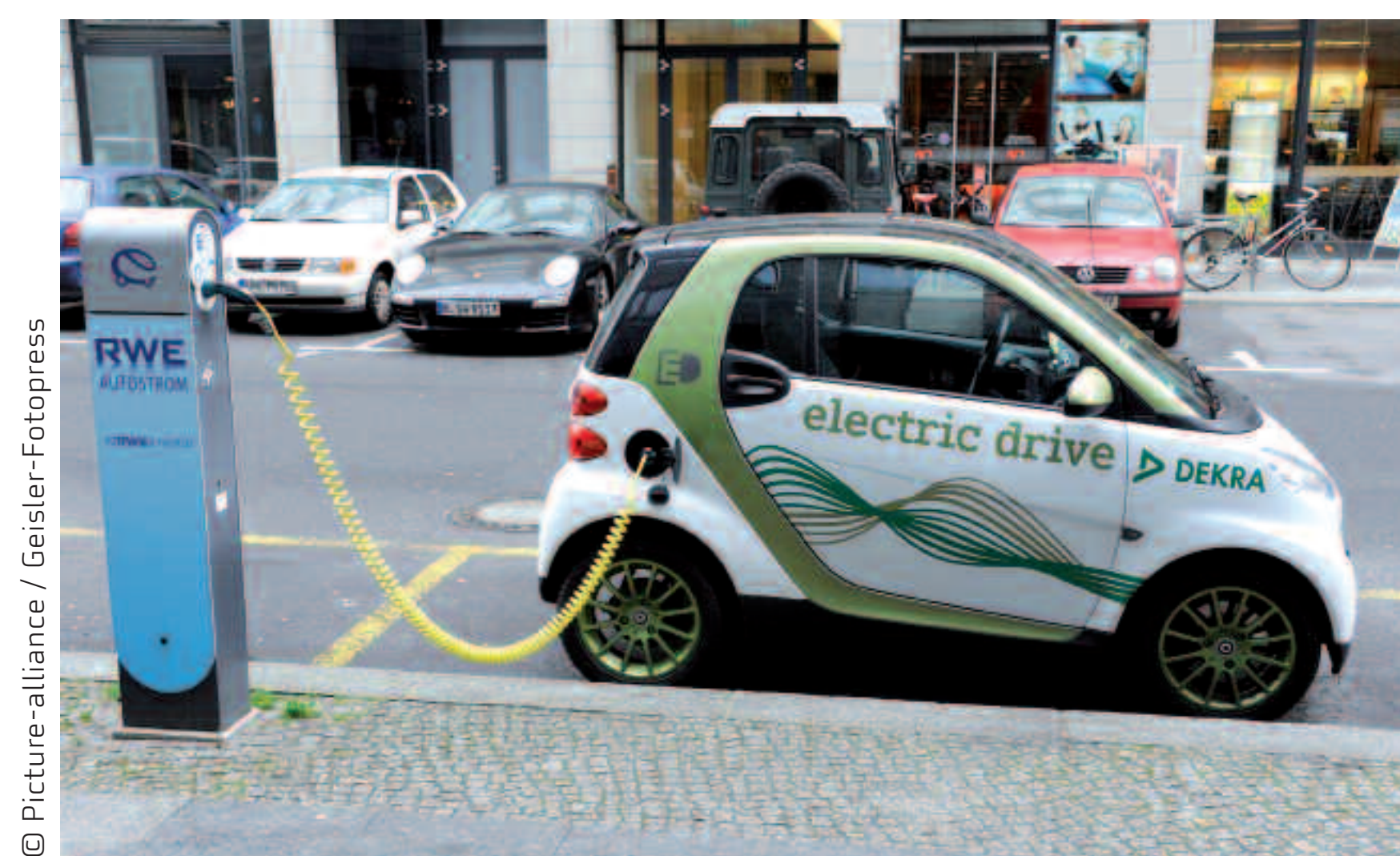
FRANCO-GERMAN COORDINATION OFTEN  
MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR THE TWO  
COUNTRIES TO DEFEND JOINT POSITIONS



In 2003, Paris and Berlin stood shoulder to shoulder to oppose the war in Iraq.



The Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, December 2009



Thinking about the car of the future is one of the collaborative projects envisaged by the 2020 Agenda.

## AGENDA 2020

In another response to the current problems, France and Germany adopted the Agenda 2020 in 2010. It contains 80 proposals for bilateral cooperation to face future challenges, and is particularly intended as a model of strong and lasting growth for the European economy.



# 50 YEARS LATER A MODEL RELATIONSHIP?

General de Gaulle was right: the Élysée Treaty was no fleeting blossom, but rather “*a rose garden, [which,] if tended well, can last forever*”. In its fifty years, it has made possible a degree of cohesion which is unique in the world.

Its first success was highly intensive political cooperation. Systematic coordination has established networks of contacts and formed habits of balancing different approaches. It has done so at every level, from heads of state to the lower levels of administration. Today there is nothing more ordinary than holding a Franco-German Council of Ministers, organizing a Franco-German staff exchange or presenting a joint Franco-German position to the European Council.

But the French and the Germans often take highly divergent, or even diametrically opposed, approaches to issues. Different attitudes are evident when it comes to nuclear energy, the environment or the euro. But this is precisely the key to their efficacy: compelled to deepen their conversation and set aside their own logic in order to understand the other’s way of thinking, the French and the Germans arrive at mutual compromises which then prove persuasive to many other European partners as well.

The treaty’s major success, however, lies in the friendship which has arisen between the people of the two countries thanks to civil society actors and to ongoing exchanges among young people, researchers, artists, and the general public of both countries, not to mention businesses. These ties of friendship seem self-evident today, but they are the result of great effort. Every generation must work to keep nourishing and expanding them.





# EUROPE AT PEACE

The victory of peace over inherited enmity, and the entrenchment of this peace in European integration, is undoubtedly the greatest achievement of the Franco-German tandem.

In 2012, the Nobel Prize Committee honoured this achievement when it awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union. *"Today war between Germany and France is unthinkable. This shows how, through well-aimed efforts and by building up mutual confidence, historical enemies can become close partners."*

But no peace is ever final. As President Mitterrand said to the Bundestag in 1983, *"It's no good invoking peace like some invisible force; peace needs to be built, and rebuilt anew every day, shored up and safeguarded. It needs a cool head and a firm will."*

And so French and German leaders have cultivated a spirit of reconciliation through symbolic words and gestures, from the historic handshake at Verdun to the festivities for the 50th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty.

Since 2006 there has also been a Franco-German history textbook, written in the hope that pupils could learn about history in a way that avoids a narrowly national perspective.

TODAY WAR BETWEEN  
GERMANY AND FRANCE  
IS UNTHINKABLE

## 60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALLIED LANDINGS IN NORMANDY

CAEN, 6 JUNE 2004 <sup>(2)</sup>

For the first time, the German Chancellor took part in the commemoration of the Allied landings that initiated the liberation of Europe from Nazi rule. *"On this day of remembrance and of hope, the men and women of France welcome you more than ever as a friend. They welcome you as a brother,"* President Chirac declared. *"France has a very different memory of 6 June 1944 than Germany does. And yet these memories have engendered the same conviction in all of us: we want peace,"* Chancellor Schröder responded.

## 91st ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMISTICE ENDING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

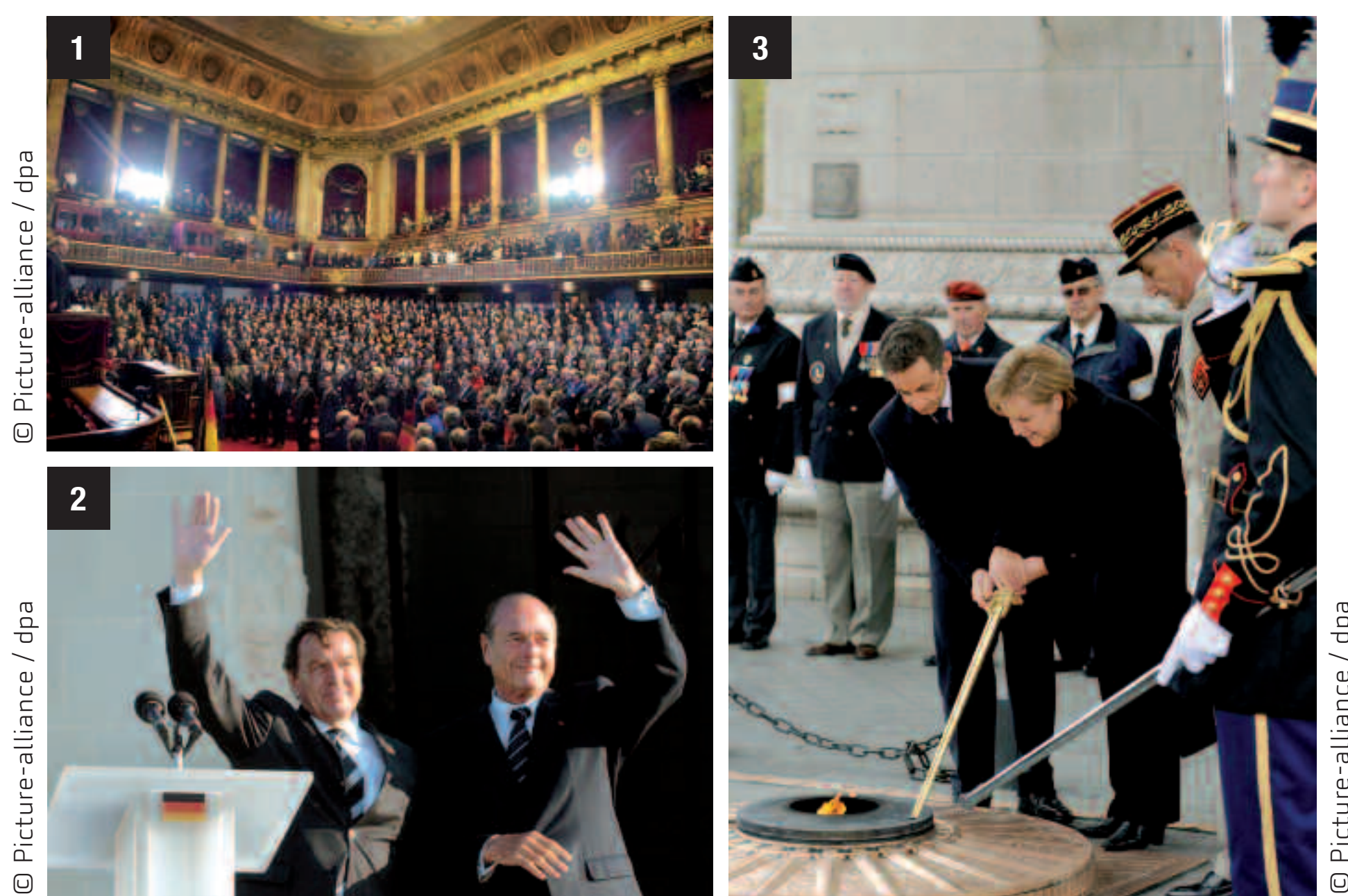
PARIS, 11 NOVEMBER 2009 <sup>(3)</sup>

Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel repeated the Verdun handshake 25 years later when they relit the flame of the unknown soldier beneath the Arc de Triomphe. *"We are commemorating not the victory of one nation over another but a terrible ordeal that caused suffering on both sides. [...] The friendship that exists between France and Germany is a precious thing"* which it is our task to preserve, President Sarkozy said. *"We will never forget how much the French people suffered at the hands of Germans in the first half of the 20th century. France has offered Germany the hand of forgiveness. Germany will never forget that. Germany has accepted the offer with profound gratitude,"* Chancellor Merkel responded.

## 40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ÉLYSÉE TREATY

VERSAILLES, 22 JANUARY 2003 <sup>(1)</sup>

In Versailles, the site of multiple humiliations, the French and German parliaments assembled jointly for the first time in history. This was where the German Empire was proclaimed in 1870 after a French defeat, and where the 1919 peace treaty holding Germany responsible for the First World War, and demanding massive reparations from it, was signed.





# COORDINATION **AT ALL LEVELS**

The meetings stipulated in the Élysée Treaty have been continually intensified. The German Chancellor and French President coordinate with one another frequently at summits, and hold numerous one-on-one talks. Since 2004 Franco-German Ministerial Councils have been held twice a year. Since 2010 ministers have had the option, if invited to do so, of taking part in the partner country's cabinet meetings. At all levels, the French and the Germans speak as openly to one another as they do within their own respective governments.

The two Commissioners for Franco-German Cooperation, France's Bernard Cazeneuve and Germany's Michael Link, are charged with making this coordination even more dynamic. Their work embeds the full scope of Franco-German cooperation in the European context, as both of them are also responsible for European affairs in their respective countries.

There are Franco-German friendship groups in the French National Assembly, the Senate, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat. These groups foster close parliamentary cooperation, including an annual colloquium, joint sessions of the two foreign affairs committees, a dialogue among political parties and exchanges between parliamentary staff.

Rounding out this coordination infrastructure are institutions such as the Franco-German Defence and Security Council, the Franco-German Finance and Business Council, the Franco-German Environment Council and a Franco-German Culture Council.



**President François Hollande (l.) and Chancellor Angela Merkel (r.)**



**The French and German foreign ministers, Laurent Fabius (l.) and Guido Westerwelle (r.)**



**The Franco-German Ministerial Council meeting at the Federal Chancellery in Berlin**

## **THE FRANCO-GERMAN METHOD IN EUROPE**

When Franco-German coordination works well, Europe makes progress. When it stalls, Europe grinds to a standstill. The Franco-German engine alternates between "*phases of efficacy and phases of idling*", according to Sorbonne professor Hélène Miard-Delacroix. In her view, the Franco-German method is comprised of three elements: analyzing the interests which are indispensable to both sides, identifying the interests and approaches which are only fleeting, and ascertaining the practical steps to be taken together.



# BUSINESSES, GOODS AND PEOPLE

## THE HUB OF TRANS-EUROPEAN NETWORKS

In communications, energy and transport, the Franco-German axis is a strategic hub for the development of trans-European networks. In recent years, for example, new high-speed rail lines (TGV and ICE) connecting Paris with Cologne, Munich and Frankfurt have brought southern, eastern and western Europe closer together.



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## INVESTMENT: THE TOP SECTORS

<p><b>THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY</b></p> <p><b>ELECTRONICS AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT</b></p> <p><b>COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL SERVICES</b></p> <p><b>TELECOMMUNICATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>BUSINESS SERVICES</b></p> <p><b>THE CHEMICAL, AUTOMOBILE AND AERONAUTICS INDUSTRIES</b></p> <p><b>TRADE</b></p> <p><b>CONSUMER GOODS</b></p> <p><b>LUXURY ITEMS</b></p>
<p><b>GERMAN INVESTMENT IN FRANCE</b></p>	<p><b>FRENCH INVESTMENT IN GERMANY</b></p>

Source : Franco-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Situated at the heart of a huge market of 500 million consumers, Germany and France are the two leading economies of Europe. They generate half of the eurozone's gross domestic product (GDP) and 40% of the European Union's GDP. Innumerable trade, industry and personal ties connect the two countries.

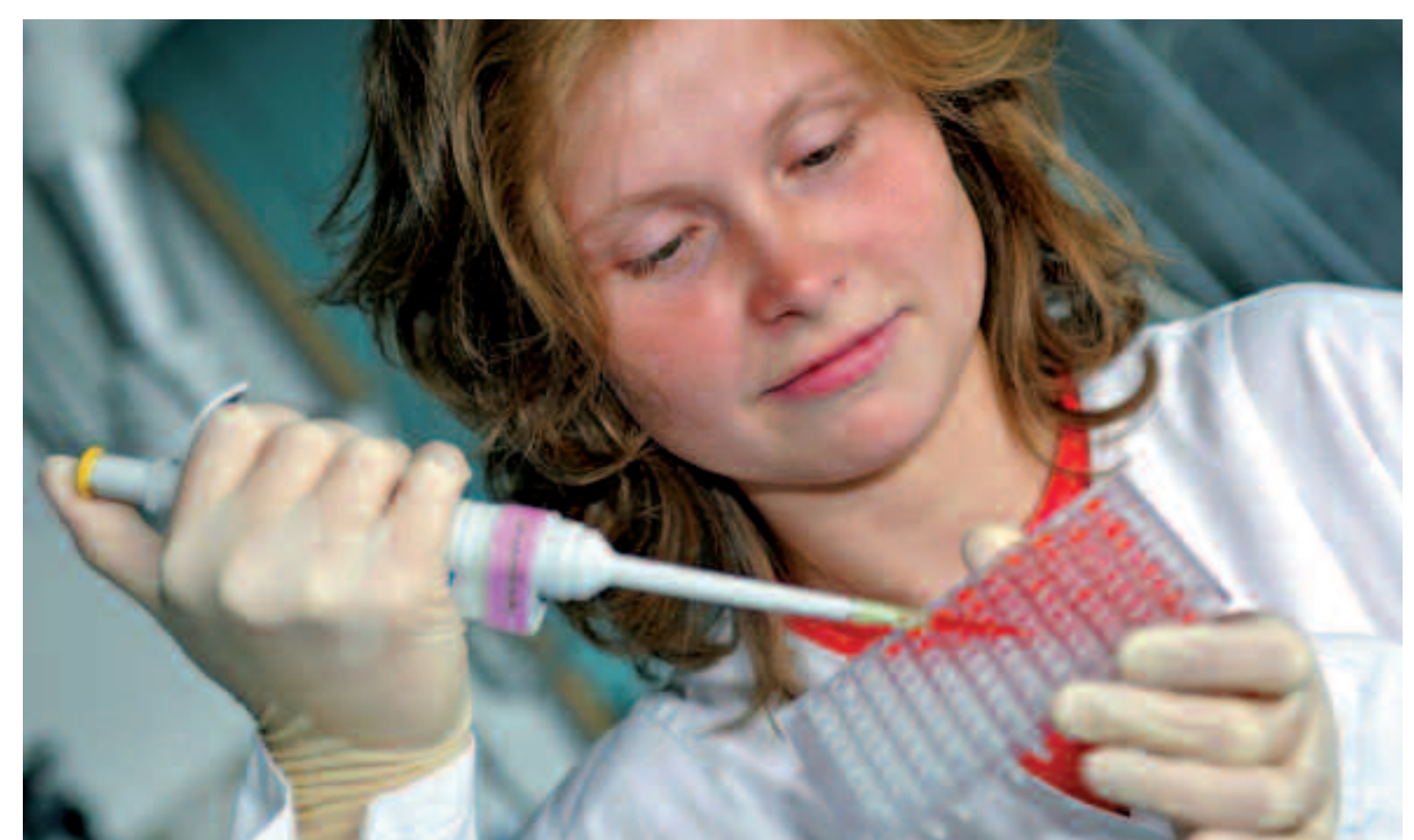
2,900 German businesses have a presence in France, and 2,300 French businesses in Germany. Altogether they provide 605,000 jobs.

Trade between the two countries totalled a massive 168 billion euros in 2011. Germany is the leading importer of French goods and exports more of its goods to France than to any other country. France is likewise the leading importer of German goods and ranks third among exporters to Germany.

Beyond this, thousands of French and German people cross the Rhine into each other's country every day for work. Cross-border cooperation is increasingly institutionalized. Eurodistricts and cross-border regions serve as the testing grounds of territorial integration in Europe.

## INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION

Franco-German cooperation is especially close in the industrial sector. From aerospace (Airbus-EADS) to pharmaceuticals, many cross-border investments and Franco-German mergers have created European and global market leaders.



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# AT THE SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

## ARTISTS AS CULTURAL MEDIATORS

Directors like Thomas Ostermeier, films like *Untouchable* and sculptors like Anselm Kiefer have garnered praise and attention in both France and Germany. The same is true of the dance choreographer Pina Bausch, who died in 2009. *Pina*, Wim Wenders' film dedicated to her, was highly successful in France.



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## THE FRANCO-GERMAN UNIVERSITY

From political science to law, the humanities to management, IT to engineering, the Franco-German University offers more than 130 binational and trinational degree courses from undergraduate to PhD level. Students at the university, which was founded in 1999, study partially in France and partially in Germany, gaining key skills for the European job market.



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France and Germany are nations dedicated to science, education, the arts and culture. The two countries' intensive exchange in these areas dates to the eighteenth century, and is now more vibrant than ever.

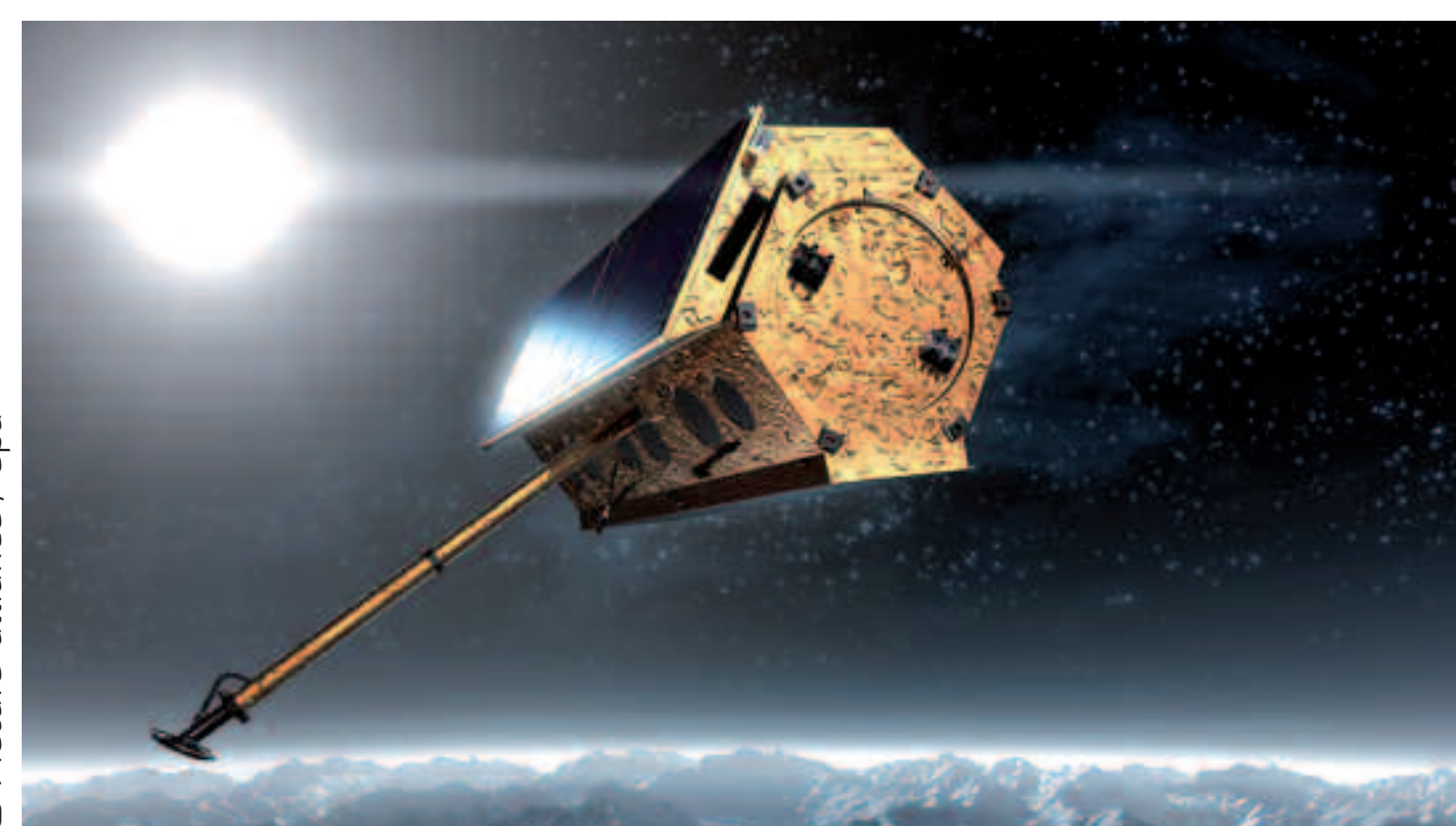
French and German theatre, dance, cinema, painting, music, philosophy and literature cross-fertilize in numerous ways. Many artists from each country live or work in the other. At an institutional level, cooperation occurs via the Franco-German Culture Council and the Franco-German Film Academy.

In the realm of education, contacts are being formed at an ever earlier age. Some 200 Franco-German preschools and nurseries are to be opened by 2020. There are already thousands of pupils attending schools which offer the "Abibac", a Franco-German combined higher education entrance qualification. Many university students have the opportunity to become better acquainted with the country on the other side of the Rhine by studying abroad.

Beyond this, partnerships such as the one between the Max Planck Society and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) are fostering a broad range of intensive scientific collaboration.

## GROUP RESEARCH

France and Germany intend to add a strategic dimension to their scientific collaboration by 2020. Since 2002, Franco-German research cooperation forums have strengthened this cooperation – which now extends to many areas, including space research, nutrition, health, energy and the social sciences.



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# SOCIETY: AN UNFINISHED DIALOGUE

Fifty years after the Élysée Treaty, Franco-German friendship has taken hold at every level and in every realm of society. A vast network of people and institutions maintains this friendship.

Exchanges – especially among young people – remain the crux of the friendship. The majority of participants agree that such encounters offer an endless source of both cultural and personal enrichment. Alongside the FGYO, the Federation of Franco-German Houses has had its role to play here since 1997.

But the Franco-German friendship has to a certain extent become a victim of its own success. Inviolable though it appears, it must be cultivated and tended on a daily basis. The feeling of closeness leads many to forget that cultural and linguistic differences remain – but these boomerang back as soon as they are neglected.

One phenomenon which has been especially troubling in recent years is the tendency for ever fewer young people to learn the neighbouring country's language. Today just over 15% of French pupils and just under 20% of German pupils are learning one another's language. A number of revival efforts have therefore been launched in recent years.



The young ambassadors of the FGYO in 2011

© Amélie Losier

## IN NUMBERS

Franco-German friendship as it stands today:

**5,000**

school partnerships

**2,200**

town and regional twinnings

**200,000**

young people discovering the neighbouring country each year through FGYO exchange programmes

**55,000**

Franco-German couples

## WHICH EVENT DO YOU MOST ASSOCIATE WITH GERMANY?

32% **The fall of the Wall, reunification**

18% **War**

The World Wars, the Second World War, 1939-45, Hitler, Nazism, the Holocaust

17% **Something other than an event**

Germany's economic prowess, its growth, its politics, Angela Merkel, Germany's strength, its leadership role in Europe, Franco-German friendship

6% **The crisis**

The euro, the euro crisis, saving the euro, combating the financial crisis, managing the Greek crisis

Source: An IFOP survey commissioned by the German Embassy in Paris, January 2012

## HAVE STEREOTYPES DISAPPEARED?

50 years after the signing of the Élysée Treaty, stereotypes are also fading. 82% of French people say they have a positive image of Germany. And their image of Germany is far less shaped by wars than by more recent events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, a majority continue to see the relationship more as a partnership than a friendship.



# A TRANSFERABLE MODEL?

**An interview with Frank Baasner,  
Director of the Ludwigsburg Franco-German Institute (DFI),  
specialist in Franco-German relations \***



© Deutsch-Französisches Institut (DFI)

**Frank Baasner**

**Why is the Franco-German relationship increasingly being studied as a model for other countries?**

*Reconciliation has succeeded between two countries that had fought each other in multiple wars. This success continues to garner admiration both within and beyond Europe. The example of Franco-German relations is invoked by many high-level politicians when they talk about seemingly insurmountable inherited enmities. [...] People are continually looking for the formula for this success.*

**In your view, what aspects of the Élysée Treaty would be transferable to other conflicts or other countries? Can the reconciliation that has occurred between these two peoples be imitated elsewhere?**

*What is unique about post-1945 Franco-German relations is that reconciliation first originated in society and then was sealed politically with the Élysée Treaty. What's significant here is the broad range of personal networks, whether it be town twinnings, school exchanges or Franco-German societies.*

*Franco-German reconciliation cannot be imitated in any generalized way. On the whole, reconciliation between conflicting parties can only work within the constraints of their particular historical circumstances. Nonetheless, a lot can be learned from the Franco-German experience, and many of these lessons can be applied elsewhere.*

*The main elements that could be applied elsewhere are the regular contacts at the highest level and the educational value of ongoing consultations. And of course youth exchanges, as institutionalized by the FGYO, are an instrument that can be used worldwide.*

\* Some recent work appears in: Stefan Seidendorf (ed.), *Deutsch-französische Beziehungen als Modellbaukasten?*, Nomos, 2012





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The 40th anniversary of the signing of the Élysée Treaty in 2003 made clear that ever fewer of the pioneering generation of Franco-German reconciliation remained, and that the torch was passing to younger generations.

In 2013, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary, the future of Franco-German relations lies in the hands of young people more than ever. Neither lasting peace nor lasting friendship can be taken for granted. It is up to each generation to take a new interest in the other side, develop a desire for community and find its enthusiasm. The true threat to Franco-German friendship is not difference, but indifference.

Now, at the outset of the 21st century, the young people of Germany and France face the shared challenge of shaping Europe. Globalization, new technologies, the financial, economic, energy and climate crises, the new security threats: all of these prompt us to seek ever greater integration so that Europe can continue to defend its model and its values around the world.

Franco-German reconciliation has created cooperation that rests on a foundation of closeness and deep trust. This is a precious legacy. Now more than ever, we are called upon to preserve this legacy and use it in the service of Europe.

# BEYOND RECONCILIATION

*"While Europe did provide the context that enabled Franco-German reconciliation, that partnership in turn was the essential precondition, the foundation and the driving force of European integration, as it remains to this day."*

Helmut Kohl, German Chancellor

