

The Franco-German couple – leadership *malgré nous et vous*?
Franco-German relationship seen from the outside
Brussels, 17.-18.02.2011

Workshop description

The workshop on the Franco-German relationship seen from the outside will take place on **17.-18.02.2011** in Brussels in the framework of the programme THESEUS with the lead of THESEUS's partner TEPSA. Aim of the workshop is to discuss the special role of the Franco-German couple in recent and longer term political and institutional evolutions of the EU. The workshop is especially interested in the perceptions of the 'Franco-German tandem' from the point of view of *other EU-countries*. Together with experts coming from all over Europe we will discuss its impact and role in the management of the current **financial and economic crisis and the reform of EU governance in this policy field**, for the evolution of **EU enlargement and external action**, and for the **reform of the EU budget**. A roundtable will discuss the **role of France and Germany in the construction of the EU** and their bilateral and multilateral relations at crucial points of the evolution of the European Union and ask what role the couple plays after the entry into force of the treaty of Lisbon.

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The Franco-German couple has played a major role for the European construction. Despite the fact that France and Germany are two powerful countries with sometimes different interests - economically as well as geopolitically - the cooperation between the two countries has often given a new impetus for the EU construction, especially in moments of crisis. The events of 1989 and the enlargement of 2004 seemed to herald the end of the couple for the EU. The 'Franco-German' motor was declared 'en panne'. But surprisingly, even after the entry into force of the treaty of Lisbon, the couple seems to play an important role for the EU, even if both countries tried at more than one occasion to break out of their 'common destiny'. The tripartite summit in Deauville and the agreements between Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy on the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact have illustrated the continuity of the special role of the Franco-German bi-lateral relationship lately.

Roundtable : Franco-German leadership over time

This roundtable will discuss the role of the Franco-German couple for the EU at important points in time (1989, 2004, 2008, 2009). Contributions cover how the couple has been analyzed and perceived from the point of view of other European countries over the years. How effective were and are the partnerships with other countries they built up, formally or informally? The speakers will ask to what extent the new contexts at each point in time – especially geographical and institutional changes with the enlargement and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty – have had an impact on the leadership role that the couple exercised and will exercise. In the new context of EU 27, under which conditions is this bilateral dynamic still productive for the European integration – is Franco-German agreement not necessarily aiming at more integration? It seems that the current crises appear as a test for both the EU and the Franco-German couple.

Panel 1: The Franco-German couple and the future economic governance and fiscal coordination in the EU

The panel will take up on recent Franco-German proposals for the management of the financial and economic crisis and especially of the current severe crises in Greece and Ireland. It will elaborate on the Franco-German proposals for the management of these crises, but especially for the longer term reform of the cooperation on economic, financial and fiscal policies in the EMU and in the EU. Reflections will touch upon the potential for acceptance of the Franco-German leadership by the other EU member states. The organizers welcome contributions that put the French and German initiatives in perspective with past proposals for an economic policy management model for EMU and EU. Speakers will compare traditional ideas on the management of financial and economic policy in France, Germany and other member states of the EU to discuss about the potentials and limits of the current reform plans.

Panel 2: France and Germany and enlargement policy and external action

Contributions will tackle the role that France and Germany played in recent developments in the policy field, as well as the perception of the ‘tandem’ by other EU countries, partners and third countries. Speakers will focus on the question of French and German leadership on EU level (e.g. on the Union for the Mediterranean or the Black Sea Synergy), on bi-lateral and multi-lateral initiatives and partnerships that both countries have built up in this setting, but also on the comparison of ideas and interests and historical sensibilities of both France and Germany on enlargement and EU external action, as well as on politics and public opinion in both countries.

Panel 3: France and Germany and the reform of the EU budget

The workshop will discuss the role of France and Germany in the current reform of the EU budget. This reform of EU spending and resources will have an important impact on the policies of the European Union in the years to come. Since the first decision for a reshufflement of the EU budget in 2006, the world economic context variables have changed dramatically. Core decisions are to be taken concerning the priorities for spending and the best way of funding EU’s objectives and the EU2020 strategy. The discussion will focus on the other EU member states’ perceptions regarding the French and German positions and preferences and their impact on the definition of the budget review notably in the light of the economic and financial crisis.