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## The Treaty of Aachen: opportunities and challenges for Franco-German cooperation in development policy and beyond

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German Development  
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8/2019

# The Treaty of Aachen: Opportunities and Challenges for Franco-German Cooperation in Development Policy and Beyond

*Laura-Theresa Krüger  
Julie Vaillé*

*In cooperation with:*

**IDDRI**

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## Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt (German Federal Foreign Office)
AFD	Agence française de développement (French Development Agency)
AfDB	African Development Bank
BMU	Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit (German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety)
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
CFD	Caisse Française de Développement (French Development Fund)
CICID	Comité interministériel pour la coopération et le développement (French Interministerial Committee for Cooperation and Development)
COP	Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
DEG	Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft
DEval	Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
G5 Sahel	Group of five Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger)
G7	Group of Seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States)
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GNI	gross national income
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IDDRI	Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales (Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations)
IDFC	International Development Finance Network
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW Development Bank)
MEAE	Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs)
MINEFI	Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances (French Ministry of Economy and Finance)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDC	nationally determined contribution
NDCP	NDC Partnership
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SA	Sahel Alliance
UCA	Unité de Coordination de l'Alliance (Coordination Unit of the Alliance)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



## **Executive summary**

As long-standing development partners and substantial providers of Official Development Assistance (ODA), France and Germany are particularly well-placed to work towards the implementation of the ambitious Agenda 2030, as they are linked by numerous bilateral cooperation strategies and exchange formats in many policy areas. In the current geopolitical context, the message of attachment and joint responsibility of France and Germany towards both European integration and the United Nations (UN), which emanates from the 2019 Treaty of Aachen, is a welcome signal. France and Germany have repeatedly committed to ambitious plans. As far as development cooperation is concerned, such plans date all the way back to the 1963 Élysée Treaty. The new political momentum for this is reflected in the recent signing of the Treaty of Aachen: in the context of the new treaty, the two countries have jointly elaborated an encompassing development policy roadmap for 2019 to 2022.

Notwithstanding the ambitions expressed therein, the signing of the Treaty also calls for reflection. To what extent have these and other grand plans during the past decades been translated into joint operational approaches and tangible action with an actual impact on Franco-German cooperation? This study examines what have been the main obstacles to Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development so far, and how these play out in practice. Its analysis draws on a series of semi-structured interviews and a review of literature on French and German development cooperation, official policy documents, as well as non-governmental analyses. Based on this analysis, the study suggests ways to improve Franco-German collaboration in the field of development in order to respond to global issues.

The study's analytical framework proposes that, after their signature, bilateral treaties still need to be brought to life through domestic implementation in order to fulfil their ambitions. Departing from an ideal-type top-down process of Franco-German cooperation and assuming high-level political commitment as given (macro level), this study focuses especially on how it is implemented at the level of policy coordination and joint policymaking (meso level) as well as during project implementation (micro level). For the meso and micro levels, the study identifies both structural (institutional setups) and ideational factors (strategic visions, cultural particularities) impinging on Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development.

Empirically, this is assessed both globally as well as through two case studies. The first case study concentrates on the Sahel Alliance, founded on a French initiative in 2017 with a view to increasing coordination and effectiveness to the benefit of development and security in five Sahel countries. The Alliance particularly addresses five fields of action (youth employment; rural development, agriculture and food security; energy and climate; governance; and, provision of basic services and decentralisation) and seeks to pool existing and planned projects of the partaking countries and institutions. The second case

study concentrates on the fight against climate change – a field to which both countries attribute great importance – and more particularly on an initiative assisting developing and emerging countries to set up and implement their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the NDC Partnership.<sup>1</sup> This was launched at the 22nd Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) in Marrakesh in 2016 upon an initiative by Germany, among others. The NDC Partnership seeks to assist the countries in the elaboration, implementation and review of their national climate plans through technical assistance and an easier access to finance.

The study found that France and Germany successfully formulate joint positions within multilateral institutions such as the European Union (meso level) and that cooperation works well at the (micro) level of project implementation. Although political commitment is reiterated at the top level (macro level), it is at the (meso) level of bilateral coordination and joint policymaking where things get most complicated. Here, as the two case studies show, the three obstacles identified (institutional setups, strategic visions, cultural particularities) come into play most clearly and are interlinked in different ways:

Firstly, the respective institutional setups played out strongly in both cases studied. Overall, the incongruence between the institutional structures leads to a perception of missing links at both the policy-making (the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), not being real counterparts in terms of their mandates as ministries leading on development policy) and the policy-implementation levels (differing for the two countries' implementation agencies due to their respective mandates and position vis-à-vis relevant ministries).

To some extent, the respective institutional setups can be assumed to shape the second obstacle, a country's strategic vision, which equally plays out in both cases studied. Although France and Germany appear in general to be “on the same page”, their priorities and visions nevertheless differ, shaped by the fact that by the fact that French policymaking is presidential, thereby more hierarchical, and German policymaking more decentralised to the ministerial level as it is a more balanced way of saying it and therefore more accurate. What is more, while German implementation agencies are powerful, yet not engaged in policymaking, the French Agence française de développement (AFD) has increasingly participated in French policymaking over the last years. The case studies reveal that neither France nor Germany have been successful in involving the respective non-initiating partner sufficiently, who, as a result, does not become a co-leading partner, resulting in a lack of joint policymaking.

This is exacerbated, thirdly, by intercultural differences regarding timing and communications (with France working more with short-notice communications and planning while Germany functions on longer-term schedules), which were particularly prominent in the Sahel Alliance case. One explanation could be that, the more an initiative is close and concrete, the more cultural particularities come to the surface.

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1 For more information, see <https://klimalog.die-gdi.de/ndc/>.

Together, the three factors identified resulted in a lack of mutual knowledge, understanding and sensibility. There is a disconnect between top-level decision-makers and working-level ministerial staff. Based on our interviews, we concluded that this was true for both countries, but especially for Germany, where decision-making is less top-down and ministries are more autonomous. To a certain extent, the ideal-type, three-level process of Franco-German cooperation that this study assumed gets stuck somewhere in the middle.

Hence, while Franco-German cooperation in preparing multilateral meetings and at the level of project implementation work fairly well, it is at the level of policy coordination that the above obstacles need to be overcome. In order to successfully take forward the commitments expressed in the Treaty of Aachen in the direction of an enhanced Franco-German cooperation, the study puts forward five policy recommendations:

**1) Safeguard the reiterated commitment from the top political level and the successful formulation of joint positions for multilateral development policy and enhance the intense collaboration in policy implementation through, for instance, co-financing:**

The Franco-German cooperation is exceptional in its character because of its strategic political alignment at the highest political level, its collaboration in multilateral development policymaking, and its coordination at the level of implementation. In an international context of increasing national interests, this kind of collaboration should continue to be defended and strengthened. Maintaining this collaboration at the highest level is essential; otherwise, the policymaking and implementation levels will not work. The good coordination in implementation and the good level of co-financing are assets that should be especially encouraged.

**2) Translate the top-level political momentum onto the working level through a follow-up mechanism with concrete targets and the participation of agencies:**

In order to make each country's strategic vision palpable and to create a propitious atmosphere for bilateral coordination, both countries should make sure the top-level political momentum is translated onto the working level. This could be achieved through the two countries agreeing on an established follow-up mechanism, in order to monitor commitments made or initiatives launched during the Franco-German Ministerial Council or during meetings at directors' level which already take place. Interviewees suggested, for instance, a follow-up mechanism in the form of a matrix detailing joint actions carried out so far at bilateral and multilateral level, and indicating the shared goals, the progress already made, as well as the ensuing steps and who is responsible for what. Meetings at the directors' level should also include the implementation agencies in order to ease the micro-level follow-up to meso-level agreements and thereby to better connect the two levels.

**3) Promote mutual knowledge and trust between the French and German administrations involved through personnel exchanges and "deep dive" sessions:**

Naturally, cultural particularities and institutional setups cannot be changed easily, yet personnel can be made aware of and become familiar with cultural differences. In order to overcome obstacles generated by the differing institutional setups, as well as each country's cultural particularities, personnel exchanges should be taken up once more especially between the French Foreign Ministry and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and reinforced between the implementing agencies. This would increase familiarisation with and knowledge of the other's ways of thinking and

working. By reaching a sufficient number of civil servants cumulated over time, such exchanges would have an impact on mutual knowledge and trust. In addition, personnel who have taken part in such exchanges will generate multiplier effects within their “home” administration and thereby help intercultural obstacles to be understood better and ultimately overcome. Further, “deep dive” formats could be beneficial, where representatives from the different institutions of both countries get together for an in-depth exchange on topics and problems. Their exchanges in this regard should be facilitated by independent contributions from research institutes and other non-governmental actors from both countries.

**4) Promote procedural best practices from both sides in order to achieve a balance between the two countries:** A balanced, respectful Franco-German collaboration in development cooperation can benefit from the identification and promotion of where one country is more advanced or better positioned than the other, that is, of “relative” best practices. This might be the French model of inner-French coordination between different institutional development actors, or the comparatively more standardised and homogeneous German evaluation procedures, monitoring progress and reviewing the results of individual programmes.

**5) In the run-up to joint actions, decide systematically whether to share the work or to work towards a common position.** The study shows that according to levels of collaboration (meso and micro) France and Germany either share the work in a spirit of division of labour (as in the case of the Sahel Alliance) or adopt common positions (as in the case of multilateral fora). But mostly these choices appear neither conscious nor systematic (as in the case of the NDC Partnership). In order to overcome the obstacles to Franco-German cooperation, the two countries should decide more systematically and in the run-up to joint action whether to indeed act jointly or whether to divide the work in areas where they share a common interest (such as Africa, climate, and so on). In either case, each country’s contribution and responsibilities should be spelled out clearly for each sector of cooperation and on the basis of their comparative advantages.

## 1 Introduction

On 22 January 2019, the French President Emmanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel solemnly signed a new Franco-German friendship treaty at the Aachen City Hall. That date marked the 56th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty of 1963, the very treaty that institutionalised Franco-German cooperation in different policy fields, among them development cooperation. In a challenged geopolitical context, the scope of the new “Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration” is first of all symbolic. The message of attachment and the joint responsibility of France and Germany towards European integration, but also to the United Nations (UN) is an outward signal that the two countries have an interest in developing a close collaboration in favour of multilateralism, both in their own countries and abroad (Berghmans, Saujot, & Hege, 2019).

At the international level, the Agenda 2030, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, involves all countries in the endeavour to achieve sustainable development in its social, ecological and economic dimensions. The achievement of these goals by 2030 demands renewed political will and intense efforts from the international community in many policy fields. France and Germany – long-standing and generous providers of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and central development actors at the European level – provide key impetus to the implementation of the Agenda (Klingebiel & Voituriez, 2018).

At the European level, France and Germany also share an interest in working more closely together: the ongoing negotiations on the future European Union’s (EU) Multiannual Financial Framework, the election of the European Parliament in May 2019, and the expected Brexit call for France and Germany to be more coordinated than ever (Krotz & Schild, 2018).

Still, however, development cooperation is a challenging policy field for bilateral cooperation, as different strategic visions, strong interests in particular regions, and country-specific portfolios persist among donors. Looking back on a long-established bilateral coordination, France and Germany are not lacking in political commitments and strategies for enhanced cooperation. But, despite these long-standing high-level political ambitions towards systematic coordination and concertation in development policy, preliminary findings show that Franco-German cooperation remains opportunity- rather than strategy-driven: despite consensus on a relatively high political level and compatible practices on the lower level of implementation, debate on concrete strategies through which to realise joint priorities and coordination beyond purely ad hoc opportunities have been perceived to be rare (DIE [German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik] & IDDRI [Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales], 2018).<sup>2</sup> In this context, the signature of the Treaty of Aachen and the

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2 In June 2018, DIE and IDDRI held a joint workshop in Paris, which brought together representatives of French and German development cooperation and researchers from both sides. The event took stock of Franco-German cooperation in global sustainable development and potential issues for further engagement, and served as a point of departure for this study. The results are summarised in DIE and IDDRI (2018).

political momentum it generated provides the opportunity to enhance Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development. It is time to question the effective impact of the two French-German friendship treaties along with the various different existing roadmaps and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) on Franco-German cooperation: Have they served as guides for common action and joint policymaking? Or do they merely add up to strategies that sit on the shelves of the development cooperation community? That is why this study seeks to analyse i) the main obstacles to Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development so far, and ii) how these play out in practice. With this, it aims to suggest ways of improvement for a more effective Franco-German collaboration in the field of development in order to respond to global issues.

The study uses an analytical framework that conceives Franco-German cooperation as a top-down process which comprises three levels: macro (high-level commitment), meso (policy coordination/joint policymaking) and micro (joint project implementation). In order to identify the main obstacles to Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development, the study adopts a particular focus on how both structural (institutional setups) and ideational factors (strategic visions, cultural particularities) are potentially at play at both the meso and the micro level. Empirically, this is assessed both globally and through two case studies.

The first case study concentrates on a concrete joint initiative, the Sahel Alliance, founded on a French initiative in 2017 with a view to increase coordination and effectiveness to the benefit of development and security in the five Sahel countries. The second case study concentrates on the fight against climate change, a field to which both countries attribute great importance, and more particularly the NDC Partnership,<sup>3</sup> launched at the COP22 climate conference in Marrakesh in 2016 upon an initiative by Germany, among others. The NDC Partnership seeks to support developing countries and emerging economies in the elaboration, implementation and review of national climate plans through technical assistance and an easier access to finance.

The study relies on literature on French and German development cooperation, official policy documents and non-governmental analyses. Additionally, between December 2018 and March 2019, the authors conducted a series of nineteen semi-structured interviews with French and German representatives of executive and implementing agencies in charge of development cooperation as well as think tank researchers (Table 1).<sup>4</sup>

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3 For more information, see <https://klimalog.die-gdi.de/ndc/>.

4 The selected interview partners were either involved in overall Franco-German coordination in development cooperation or more particularly in the Sahel Alliance or the NDC Partnership. Most of them were located at headquarters, while two interviewees were working in the field.

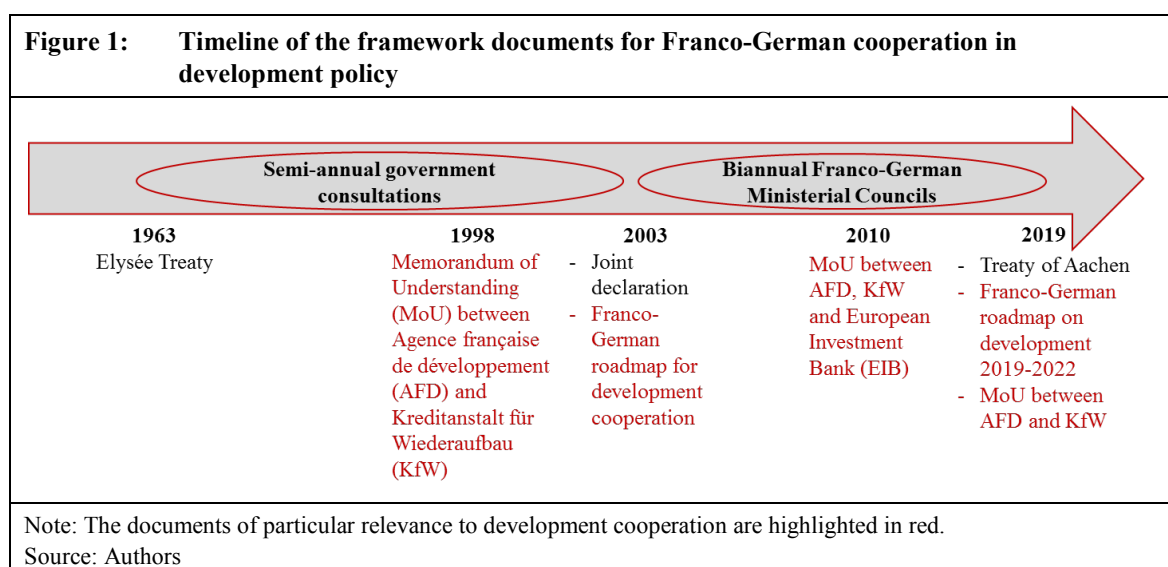
	France	Germany
Ministries and other governmental institutions	7	2
Implementation agencies	4	4
Think tanks	0	2
TOTAL	11	8

The study is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a stocktaking of the history and formats of Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development. The third section then goes on to present the study’s analytical framework, which draws on social constructivist research on norms and seeks to sketch an ideal-type three-level process of Franco-German cooperation. The fourth section highlights different obstacles potentially constraining the bilateral cooperation and investigates how these play out in the cases of the Sahel Alliance and the NDC Partnership. After a discussion of the case-study findings in the light of the study’s analytical framework, Section 5 provides the study’s conclusions, including policy recommendations aimed at enhancing Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development.

## 2 Stocktaking of Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development

### *Franco-German cooperation in general*

Since the signing of the “Treaty between the French Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany on Franco-German Cooperation”, commonly known as the “Élysée Treaty”, on 22 January 1963, France and Germany have been linked through different exchange and cooperation formats (Figure 1). The Treaty established various levels of coordination and covered three policy fields: external affairs (including development aid); defence; as well as education and youth. The French Head of State and the German Head of Government were to meet at least twice a year; the Foreign Ministers were to assure implementation and meet at least four times a year.



Over 56 years, Franco-German cooperation has evolved and been complemented by additional agreements. Since 2003, Franco-German cooperation is discussed in biannual Franco-German Ministerial Councils with a view to improving the implementation prospects of the decisions taken (Schild, 2003, p. 2). On these occasions, once or twice a year, the French President and Prime Minister as well as the German Chancellor and all or some of the French and German ministers get together and discuss various topics relating to Franco-German cooperation. These Councils are organised along selected themes, usually two per session (one economic and the other relating to civil society) as well as along European topics (Portail Franco-Allemand, n.d.). The Councils are prepared and followed up on by two Commissioners for Franco-German cooperation, each of whom is supported by a deputy from the partner's Foreign Ministry.<sup>5</sup>

In 2018, the French President Emmanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that a new Élysée Treaty would comprise new objectives as well as new forms of cooperation. The Treaty of Aachen was signed on 22 January 2019, the 56th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty, at the City Hall in Aachen. The Treaty goes beyond its predecessor by focusing on more policy fields. Besides culture, education, research and mobility, a special emphasis is on external relations and global cooperation (European affairs; peace, security and development; sustainable development, climate, environment and economic affairs) as well as cross-border cooperation.

#### *Coordination in the field of development cooperation*

Among the different policy fields and topics of Franco-German collaboration, development cooperation is of the first hour. According to the various framework documents, cooperation in this field spans both policymaking and implementation levels. The Élysée Treaty commits the two governments to “systematically compar[ing] their programs [of development aid] with a view to maintaining a close coordination” and to “study the possibility of undertaking joint projects” in development cooperation (Treaty between the French Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany on Franco-German Cooperation, 1963, title II A, par. 3). In a Joint Declaration of 2003, the two countries again committed to reinforce their coordination, particularly in defining and evaluating development cooperation priorities. Their intention was to strive to formulate joint positions in international bodies and to conduct joint or complementary projects, especially in Africa (Gemeinsame Erklärung zum 40. Jahrestag des Elysée-Vertrags 2003, par. 31, 32). In 2003, the Joint Declaration was complemented by a roadmap on development cooperation, which formulated five commitments: defining common priorities for bilateral aid policies; adopting common positions in international entities; implementation of joint projects, especially in Africa; exchange of personnel; and the intensification of the international voluntariat. Through these commitments, the roadmap sought to translate the general political will into concrete measures and to ensure its implementation by defining fields of action. At least for some years, the roadmap was evaluated and updated regularly within the joint Council of Ministers as well as between the German Federal Ministry for Economic

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5 At the time of writing, the two Commissioners were the French Secretary of State for European Affairs, Amélie de Montchalin, and the German Minister of State for Europe, Michael Roth.



Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) (Moreau & von Kap-Herr, 2008, p. 12).

Next, the Treaty of Aachen of 2019 has now established an annual political dialogue on international development policy in order to enhance the coordination of policy planning and implementation (Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Französischen Republik über die deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit und Integration 2019, art. 7). What is more, France and Germany have now also committed to a stronger collaboration regarding the African continent and in particular to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement. Due to the inclusion of various “new” policy fields into the treaty, as compared to the 1963 Élysée Treaty, development cooperation seems less prominent in the Treaty of Aachen. Having said that, a new roadmap on development, valid for the period 2019-2022, has been elaborated by the BMZ and the MEAE with the objective of reinforcing Franco-German cooperation on the matter. It puts a strong geographical focus on Africa, seeking to enhance institutional exchange and coordination and to strengthen cooperation between the operators as well as identifying various intervention sectors of mutual interest.<sup>6</sup>

### **3 The process of Franco-German cooperation**

While the high-level engagement between France and Germany thus appears to be important and structured, the question remains as to its impact on the implementation of common policies or projects. How should Franco-German cooperation ideally take place? And what may prove to be obstacles to Franco-German cooperation in global development? In order to answer these questions, the third and fourth subsection present a theory-inspired analytical framework.

#### **3.1 Analytical framework: an ideal-type process comprising three levels**

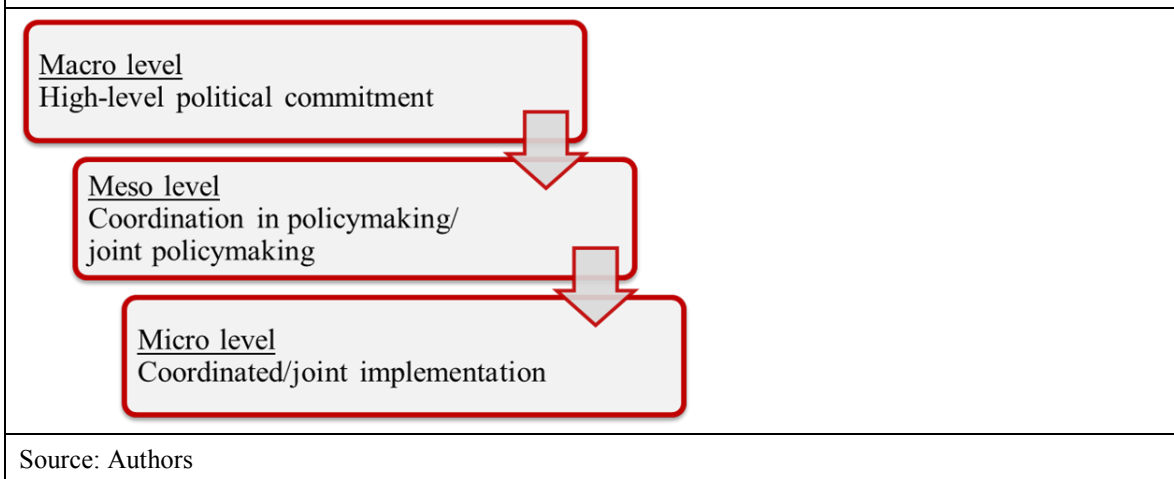
As evident from the above stocktaking, Franco-German cooperation in global development came to life mainly in a top-down manner, that is, starting with bilateral agreements and roadmaps, which were then ideally put into practice. This suggests that an ideal-type Franco-German cooperation can be inductively sketched as a trickle-down process from a top-level political commitment in these bilateral agreements (macro level) to an intense coordination at the level of policymaking, ideally leading to coordinated or joint policymaking (meso level) and ultimately translated into joint or coordinated implementation (micro level) (Figure 2).<sup>7</sup>

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6 These are: financing for development; climate change and environment; health; education and vocational training; global sustainable supply chains; and, migration and mobility. Gender and fragility are further included as cross-cutting topics.

7 In this study’s analytical framework, the macro, meso and micro levels all refer to processes taking place at the (sub-)national level, that is, “macro” does not refer to the multilateral level, as could be assumed from the wording alone.

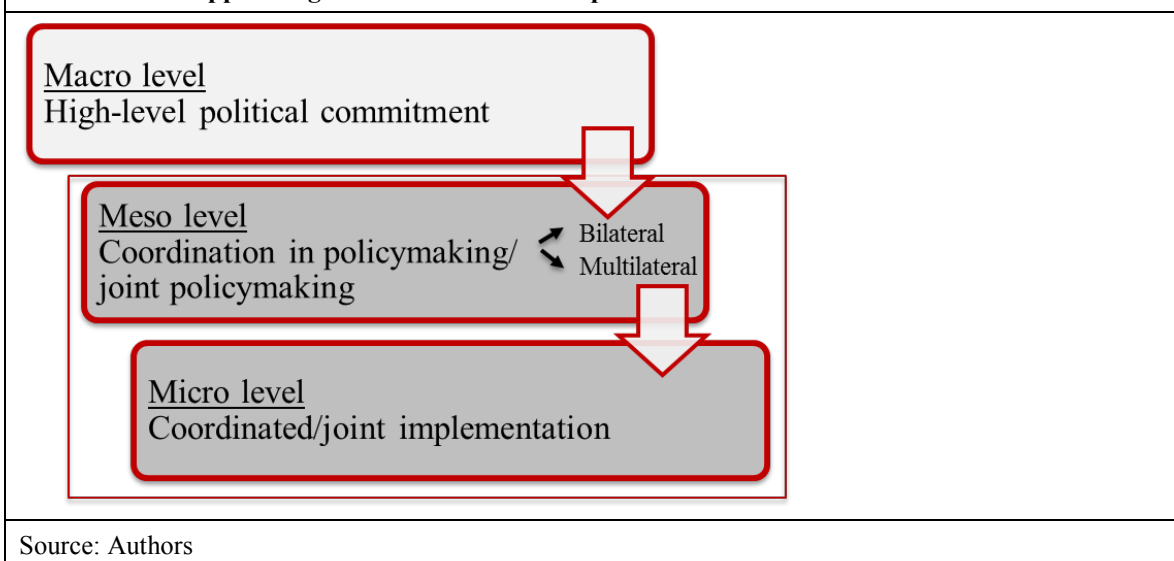
**Figure 2: The ideal-type process of Franco-German cooperation in global development**



Drawing on social constructivist research on norms, we assume that international (bilateral) agreements (and the principles and norms they contain) still need to be brought to life at the state level (and in our case also at bilateral level). On the one hand, the high-level commitment to and adoption of an agreement does not automatically lead to its internalisation by the actors involved in everyday policymaking (Elgström, 2000, pp. 469, 472; Rosert & Schirmbeck, 2007, p. 255). On the other hand, it does not automatically result in effective implementation either (Risse & Ropp, 2013), a process which has not yet been examined closely (Betts & Orchard, 2014).

Against this backdrop, our study focuses on the implementation of what has been agreed at the top political level, namely that which comprises the lower two boxes in Figures 2 and 3. We assume that macro-level political commitment is given with a view to the manifold Franco-German agreements spelled out above. This upper level has thus been bracketed out of the analysis, which focuses on the latter two levels. What is more, the meso level is investigated from two angles: i) coordination/joint policymaking in multilateral institutions and initiatives; and ii) bilateral coordination/joint policymaking (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: This study's research interest in the ideal-type process of Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development**



However, understanding the enactment of Franco-German cooperation as a trickle-down process is, of course, a simplification. In order to better connect the different levels, the bottom-up feedback mechanisms between the micro and meso as well as between the meso and the macro levels require to receive increased attention in future research.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 Franco-German cooperation at the meso and micro levels

This subsection seeks to analyse how Franco-German cooperation fares at both the meso and micro levels, on the basis of aid practitioner interviews complemented by additional document analysis.

*Meso level i): France and German successfully forward joint positions at the multilateral level.*

Our interview findings suggest that Franco-German cooperation on development topics works well as regards input into multilateral bodies. This also emerges from early implementation documents following the first Franco-German roadmap on development of 2003. To start with, there is a relatively institutionalised, yet informal, coordination ahead of the various EU meetings in the form of a systematic consultation between the BMZ and the French Foreign Ministry. In this context, the 2019 roadmap underlines the sharing of negotiation lines ahead of and during European negotiations in the form of joint non-papers. Before intervening in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), France and Germany equally maintain informal discussions, as in the case of the reform of the reporting of concessional loans as ODA in 2014. Interviewees highlight that – although on a less institutionalised basis – Franco-German cooperation equally proves fruitful within the framework of international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank Group. The GAVI Vaccine Alliance, the G7, or the G20 were among the other multilateral bodies mentioned.

Franco-German cooperation at the multilateral level is equally strong between implementing agencies, especially the AFD and the KfW Development Bank (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, KfW). The forwarding of joint approaches to multilateral entities (such as the OECD-DAC or the EU) was already a topic in the first cooperation agreement signed between the AFD's predecessor CFD (Caisse Française de Développement) and the KfW in 1998 (CFD & KfW, 1998). Since 2002, they have shared an office building for their Brussels representations, a fact that has helped increase both the number and amount of co-financing within the framework of blending activities with the European Commission. In 2007, the AFD and KfW were among the founders of the Practitioners' Network of

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8 Some of the mechanisms described in the recommendations below (from the exchange of personnel to existing best practices, for instance regarding evaluation) could potentially enhance such feedback mechanisms between the micro and the meso levels.

European Development Cooperation.<sup>9</sup> Since 2010, together with the European Investment Bank, both the AFD and KfW have been engaged in the Mutual Reliance Initiative, which foresees that one partner acts as lead financier and assures the majority of tasks during the cycle of a co-financed project (EIB [European Investment Bank], 2019). In 2011, the International Development Finance Network (IDFC), an association of development banks, was founded upon a KfW initiative. For the period of two years, the AFD is currently chairing the IDFC's Steering Group. The two institutions generally seek to feed their expertise into multilateral discussions, as on the current debate over the future European development architecture (KfW, 2017). Such joint lobbying efforts are to be expanded under the new MoU, which the AFD and the KfW signed in Frankfurt on 4 April 2019.

*Meso level ii): Bilateral joint policymaking and strategic cooperation, however, seem to get stuck at some point.*

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty, the French Foreign Ministry and the German Development Ministry published a joint overview of official Franco-German initiatives in development cooperation. Therein, the two countries underline their similarities as to the organisation of development cooperation and the encompassing portfolios both work on (BMZ [Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung] & MAE [Ministère des Affaires étrangères], 2013, pp. 11-13). In practice, however, as the interviewed practitioners described, things work less easily at the bilateral policymaking and strategic level.

This cannot solely be attributed to the lack of exchange formats, as a regular, yearly exchange between the BMZ and MEAE takes place at a high political level (directors' level). This exchange serves to identify potential joint endeavours for the following year and facilitate the ensuing operational implementation. Further, experts at the strategic level meet on a regular basis (BMZ & MAE, 2013, p. 6). At the working level, the exchange is less formalised, although desk officers are in contact on an ad hoc basis.

Rather, there seems to be a lack of knowledge, understanding and sensibility towards the other side – which is not an untypical problem in intercultural cooperation. While this is apparently eased at the operational level via an intense and long-standing exchange of personnel, such an exchange does not exist to date at the policymaking level in the field of development. Formerly, from 2005 to at least 2008, there was an institutionalised personnel exchange between the French development unit within the Foreign Ministry and the German BMZ (Moreau & von Kap-Herr, 2008, p. 14). The roadmap for 2019-2022 foresees its (re-)establishment (without giving further details) and – according to our interviews – the BMZ was especially keen that this take place. It may, however, not be easy to put into practice since it reportedly collides with French personnel exchange quotas which are for the moment entirely fulfilled by diplomats.

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9 The KfW is, however, to date not a member of the network, which is perceived as a network of implementing agencies of technical cooperation.

This indicates a disconnect between top-level decision-makers and working-level ministerial staff. Both French and German interviewees regretted that high-level political momentum was not transposed to the working level within the ministries, where coordination processes were lengthy and wearisome and where Franco-German cooperation needed to be incentivised more strongly.

*Micro level: Cooperation works relatively well at the level of project implementation.*

At the operational level, several factors seem to propel cooperation that works relatively well.

First of all – as has been frequently underlined – Franco-German cooperation is eased by a long-standing personnel exchange, especially between the implementing agencies. The exchange of staff is best established between the AFD (and its predecessor the CFD) and the KfW and has existed since 1994. The two institutions have been exchanging personnel on both a short-term (between three weeks and one year) and long-term basis (usually one staff member at a time for a period of two to three years) in order to enhance mutual understanding and facilitate cooperation at the operational level. Under the new MoU signed in early April 2019, staff exchanges are to increase substantially. Moreover, while in the early years the personnel exchanged tended to be situated in operational units, the AFD and KfW have reportedly been delegating personnel to each other's strategic department for several years now.

Between technical assistance agencies, there is also personnel exchange, although it is less institutionalised: in 2005, for instance, the GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, the largest of three institutions merged into Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ, in 2011) concluded an agreement with the Association française de volontaires du progrès which foresaw French voluntary staff working in GTZ projects (Moreau & von Kap-Herr, 2008, p. 14). The head of the GIZ's Berlin office, Karin Kortmann, described the GIZ experience with personnel exchanges between development organisations as very positive and recommended their extension under the revised Élysée Treaty (Kortmann, 2018).

Second, regular discussions take place at the directors' level of implementing agencies. The 1998 cooperation agreement between the financial assistance agencies already specified an increased exchange of information and the discussion of strategies (CFD & KfW, 1998). Today there is a regular exchange at the level of top and middle management and exchange on ongoing and planned programmes and projects is to be expanded further under the new MoU. A regular exchange is also ongoing between the two institutions' subsidiaries which attribute funding to private sector initiatives in developing and emerging countries, DEG (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft) and Proparco. The GIZ has likewise been in a regular dialogue with the AFD, especially on the topics of vocational training, climate change, and digitalisation; between the GIZ and its much smaller counterpart Expertise France there are also annual exchange meetings.

Third, overall cooperation seems to work well in the implementation of joint projects, especially in co-financing. In 2015, the KfW was the AFD's third most important co-financer in terms of volume (after the European Commission and the World Bank Group); between 1980 and 2015, they jointly implemented 91 co-financing projects, mainly in Africa, with a total volume of EUR 2.87 billion from the AFD and around 3.41 billion from

the KfW. Co-financing was already emphasised in the 1998 cooperation agreement; the renewed MoU intends to significantly increase co-financing arrangements, both in amounts and project numbers. By May 2018, the GIZ was also implementing 15 EU-co-financed projects and programmes jointly with either Expertise France or the AFD (Kortmann, 2018). GIZ and Expertise France have implemented joint approaches in various different African countries and reportedly share offices in some partner countries. The regional focus of AFD-KfW cooperation is traditionally on Africa, while other regions of the world, such as Asia and the Mediterranean, have been gaining in importance in recent years. Sector-wise, collaboration concentrates on the supply of energy and water as well as on climate change (KfW, 2017), important focus sectors in financial terms for both agencies.

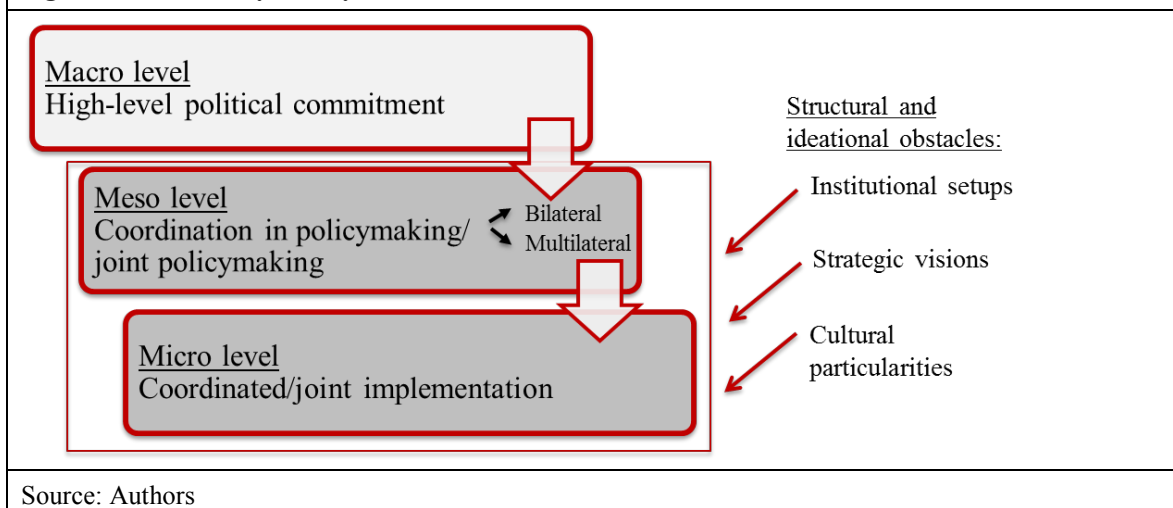
#### 4 Obstacles to Franco-German cooperation and how they play out in practice

This section now turns towards structural and ideational obstacles that may result in deficient cooperation between France and Germany, especially at the meso level. To this end, it first derives three factors to be studied (institutional setups, strategic visions, and cultural particularities) and then investigates how these play out in practice in the cases of the Sahel Alliance and the NDC Partnership.

##### 4.1 Analytical framework: obstacles to Franco-German cooperation

In order to identify the main obstacles to French and German cooperation in global development, the study needs a particular focus on ideational and structural factors at play potentially at both the meso and the micro level. Structure-wise, the focus naturally turns to institutional setups, that is, who is involved in policymaking and policy implementation, a field where the two countries show great differences. Regarding ideational aspects, the overall strategic visions need to be at least compatible, if not congruent in order to allow for finding a common ground for policy initiatives. At both policymaking and project implementation level, cultural differences are further expected to play out in day-to-day cooperation practice (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: The study’s analytical framework with the structural and ideational obstacles identified**



The three factors are presented in more detail below, based on both literature and document analysis as well as on findings from our interviews.

### *Diverging institutional setups for policymaking and implementation*

While, at a first glance, in both France and Germany a multitude of institutions is involved in development policymaking, the two countries diverge substantially as to these institutions' respective mandates and power in policymaking and policy implementation.<sup>10</sup> Looking at Figure 4, one might assume that the meso level of policymaking concerns different ministries in the two countries whereas the micro level refers to implementation agencies; as the presentation below will show, however, this is not necessarily the case in both countries.

Since the 1998 reforms, French development policymaking has been mainly in the hands of two ministries (Gabas, 2005, p. 252f.; OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], 2018, p. 66): the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, MEAE) and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, MINEFI).<sup>11</sup> The former takes the lead in strategy definition (OECD, 2013, p. 59). Within the ministry, development cooperation is coordinated by the Directorate-General for Globalisation, Culture, Education and International Development (Direction générale de la mondialisation, de la culture, de l'enseignement et du développement international, DGM).<sup>12</sup> The second, economic pole resides in the Ministry of Economy and Finance (part of a merged ministry between the Ministère des Finances et Comptes Publics and Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Industrie et du Numérique).<sup>13</sup> The Ministry of Economy and Finance prepares the aid budget and reports ex post ODA expenditures to the DAC (Lundsgaarde, 2013, p. 128). Within the MINEFI, the Directorate-General for Treasury (Direction Générale Trésor) is in charge of “supervising” French development aid (Direction Générale Trésor, 2018). It is responsible for the French contributions to international financial institutions, questions of indebtedness and ODA reporting (OECD, 2018, pp. 66).<sup>14</sup>

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10 The study focuses only on governmental institutions, but France and Germany also diverge in the organisation and weight of the legislative or of non-governmental actors (NGOs, foundations, think tanks and political parties, for instance; see de Cazotte, 2017).

11 Between 1961 and 1998, France had a separate Ministry for Cooperation (Ministère de la Coopération), which was then merged into the Foreign Office (Sadoulet, 2007, pp. 85-172; Lundsgaarde, 2013, pp. 133-138).

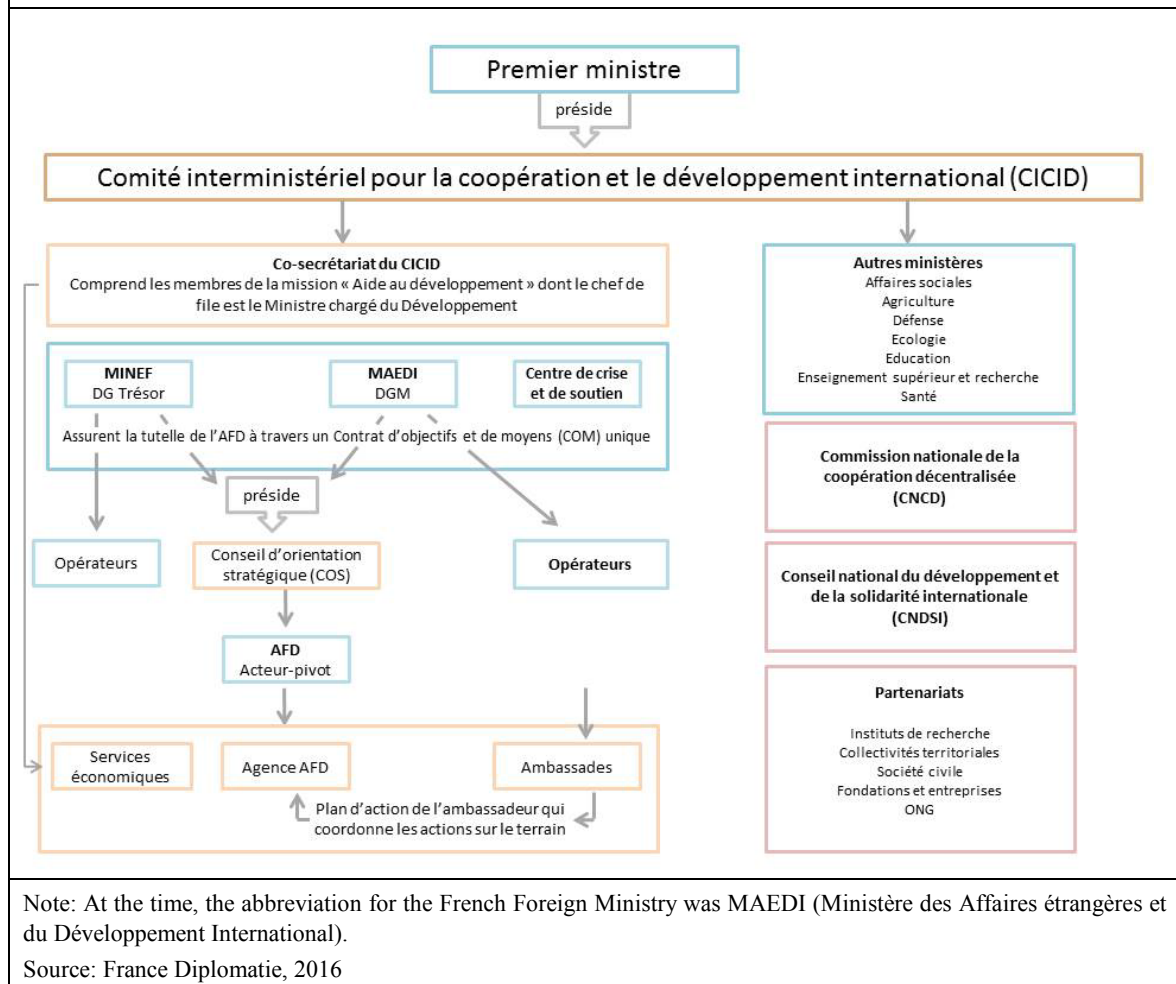
12 Over the years, there was mostly either a *Secrétaire d'Etat* (Minister of State) or a *Ministre délégué* (Deputy Minister) in charge of French development cooperation within the Foreign Ministry; under Emmanuel Macron, there is no such post.

13 The strong involvement of the Ministry of Economy constitutes a French particularity (Sadoulet, 2007, p. 29).

14 Around ten other groupings (operators, specialist bodies and partnerships) may be further involved in French development aid (OECD, 2018, p. 66); decentralised cooperation has been growing in recent years (OECD, 2013, p. 19).

To assure coordination, the Interministerial Committee for Cooperation and Development (Comité interministériel pour la coopération et le développement, CICID) reunites the ministries involved in questions of development aid on an irregular basis.<sup>15</sup> Under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, it defines the main strategic directions of French development cooperation, its target countries and priority sectors (OECD, 2018, p. 66). MEAE and MINEFI officials jointly serve as the co-Secretariat of the CICID (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: The French institutional system for development cooperation**



The French president retains the ultimate authority to provide political guidelines, including the volume of aid, its geographical concentration as well as its use, based on exchanges with the government administrations (Meimon, 2007, p. 44; Lundsgaarde, 2013, p. 125). In February 2018, the CICID has further installed a Development Council (Conseil de Développement), which is to be presided over by the President and is to take

15 The CICID reunites the ministries in charge of foreign affairs, development, finance, education, higher education and research, interior affairs, defense, the environment, the budget, foreign trade and Overseas France (MEAE, 2018a). Although meant to meet once or twice a year, the CICID has only met ten times since its inception in 1998, with breaks between 2009 and 2013 as well as 2013 and 2016; the latest meeting was in February 2018.



strategic decisions on the implementation of French aid in an ad hoc rhythm (CICID [Comité interministériel de la coopération internationale et du développement], 2018, p. 7). As a result, it may now prove easier for France to achieve “whole-of-government” approaches than Germany, whose system is less centralised and involves federal ministries that are comparatively more independent.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, French development policymaking is in the hands of two strong yet not exclusively or primarily development-focused ministries. Thereby, questions of development risk being subordinated to foreign policy or economic concerns. What is more, the central implementation agency, the AFD, has been gaining in power, responsibilities and resources over the last years. For instance, some of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs missions have been progressively transferred to the AFD, such as democratic governance issues. While the MEAE and the MINEFI are responsible for the strategic oversight of the AFD, the MEAE’s capability in particular has been weakened by a high turnover of staff, “whereas AFD has strengthened its strategic capacity in recent years” (OECD, 2018, p. 67).

Germany has had a separate ministry for development, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ), since 1961 (see Figure 6).<sup>17</sup> Since then, it has been providing a cabinet-rank minister, making Germany “the only major aid-giving government with a permanent ministerial level development agency” (Lancaster, 2007, p. 187). Over time, the BMZ has gained in competence, budget size and personnel (Ashoff, 2005, p. 721; OECD 2015, p. 54); today, it makes decisions about German priorities on the basis of the coalition treaties as well as on aid allocations among partner countries and sectors (Bohnet, 2017, p. 11). The BMZ is subsequently required to validate its indicative planning for technical and financial assistance with both the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Economy (Bohnet, 2017, p. 13).<sup>18</sup>

Overall, although the BMZ constitutes a comparatively strong voice for development among the German ministries, it remains weaker and smaller than the two French ministries in charge of development cooperation and interviewees pointed to the risk of its not being considered a proper counterpart for the French Foreign Ministry. Moreover, despite an inter-ministerial agreement of 2012 on the division of tasks (AA [German Federal Foreign Office] & BMZ, 2012), responsibilities between the BMZ and the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt, AA), the German ministry with the second largest ODA budget (Bohnet, Klingebiel, & Marschall, 2018, p. 12), are not always clear, at times leading to difficulties of

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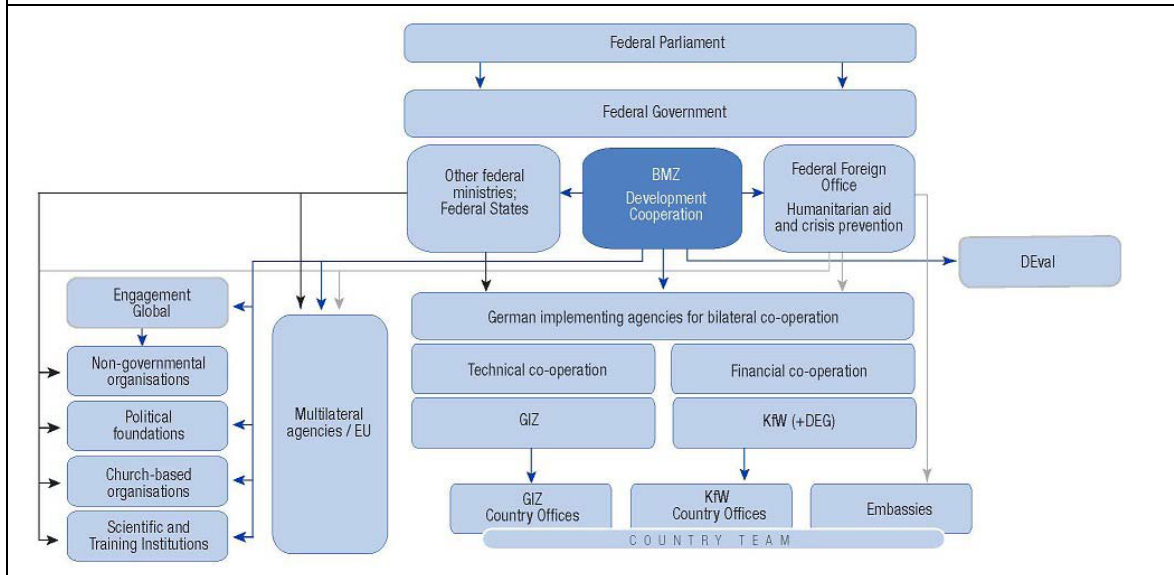
16 Although in Germany, also, there is a need for coalition consensus; in the case of divergences, the Chancellor has the last word (*Richtlinienkompetenz*).

17 Up to 1993, the official designation was the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit).

18 Under certain conditions, the BMZ further needs consent from the parliamentary Budget Committee (Bohnet, 2017, p. 13).

coordination and sometimes even to competition.<sup>19</sup> While policymaking is more centralised and thereby quicker in France, several interviewees from both countries regretted the multitude of actors involved on the German side, resulting in both time-intensive inter-ministerial coordination and confusion over who is in charge of what.

**Figure 6: The German institutional system for development cooperation**



Source: OECD, 2015, p. 53

Turning towards policy implementation, the institutional setup diverges substantially on two grounds. On the one hand, against the backdrop of having a separate ministry for development cooperation, Germany sharply distinguishes policymaking from policy implementation. Thus, from the BMZ perspective, the GIZ and KfW are regarded as purely technical agencies without decision-making powers at the policy level and, compared to the AFD, have smaller strategy teams.<sup>20</sup> In France, by contrast, where the strategic orientation of development is decided jointly by the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the main implementation agency AFD, in charge of financial cooperation, has been gaining power and responsibilities, allowing it to increasingly contribute to political decisions (Cumming, 2018; OECD, 2018, p. 67).<sup>21</sup> This results in an incompatibility between the BMZ, which concentrates content-wise decision-making powers in German development cooperation but is weaker than the MEAE, and the AFD, which is perceived by the BMZ as being too technical to be a real counterpart.

19 Twelve other ministries further allocate (mostly small) ODA budgets (Bohnet et al., 2018). The German *Länder* and municipalities also provide ODA, but are not involved in federal policymaking.

20 Interviewees further saw the GIZ and KfW as more inward-looking in recent years, constrained by a cost-reduction imperative.

21 One interviewee even found that the AFD Director had a political weight almost comparable to German ministers.

On the other hand, despite a major reform merging the three different German implementation agencies in 2011, Germany continues to maintain a sharp distinction between financial cooperation (in the hands of the KfW) and technical cooperation (implemented mainly by the GIZ). Both the KfW and GIZ are strong implementation agencies with encompassing personnel bodies and a strong in-field representation. France, by contrast, has suggested inserting its (much smaller) operator for technical assistance, Expertise France, which was set up through a merger of different operators in 2015, into the AFD Group in 2019 (CICID, 2018, p. 9). The aim is to boost the French capacity for technical assistance. From this scenario, some French practitioners anticipate an increase in competition with the GIZ while others expect more cooperation opportunities between the two.

The greatest congruence in the institutional setup certainly exists between the AFD and the KfW, as they are in general similar institutions with regard to instruments or intervention sectors and countries (Moreau & von Kap-Herr, 2008, p. 14; Bédécarrats, 2018, p. 7), although not with regard to their (non-)political character. This leads to a broad array of opportunities for cooperation and exchange, as outlined above; however, the similar portfolios and regions of activity may also sometimes result in a competition between the two agencies, as pointed out in various interviews (see also KfW, 2017).

Linked to the former point, it appears that the meso level of policymaking is indeed restricted to the ministerial level in Germany, while, in the case of France, the AFD is active at both this meso level of policy- and strategy-making and the micro level of implementation, creating a divergence between the two countries' institutional setups. Recently, France has been seeking to clarify the roles of each entity, with the MEAE in charge of defining and developing France's strategic positions in terms of development and the AFD responsible for the implementation of this vision through the financing of projects in partner countries. According to our interviewees, this division of roles should be reflected in the framework agreement between the MEAE and the AFD, which will be updated later this year.

*Strategic visions: overall on the same page, but with many different nuances*

In both France and Germany, development cooperation is currently relatively high on the political agenda: Under President Macron, French development cooperation has received new impetus, with the goal to achieve 0.55 per cent of gross national income (GNI) for ODA by 2022; the reorientation on five priority sectors (stability, climate, education, gender, health); and the elaboration of a new orientation and programming law (updating the one of 2014) to be presented to parliament in summer 2019. German development cooperation has benefitted from a continued increase over the last years, even meeting the international 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI target in 2016 (although mainly because of substantially increased costs of hosting refugees). Chancellor Angela Merkel has been attributing high importance to the issue of development throughout her time in office (de Cazotte, 2017, pp. 122-125). Content-wise, France and Germany share a strong geographical focus on Africa (long-standing in the case of France, recently increased for Germany) and on supporting private sector development, for instance.

France and Germany also share the same rationale for justifying aid. An examination of both countries' aid narratives in their strategic documents shows that they see ODA as a means of building global policies capable of “managing” or “repairing” globalisation to

the benefit of countries of the Global South, with the difference that Germany, more than France, perceives that its actual economic prosperity carries certain obligations in exchange (Voituriez, Vaillé, & Bakkour, 2017).

By contrast, their strategic visions diverge, first, regarding their orientations towards other donors. Our interviews with French practitioners suggest that, first of all, Germany tends to underline its orientation to international commitments; at times French practitioners see this as limiting the room for manoeuvre in Franco-German cooperation. In the European donor landscape, Germany is a member of the so-called “like-minded group”. France, by contrast, has a certain tradition of coordination with other permanent members of the UN Security Council (especially the United States and the United Kingdom).

Secondly, as to focal topics, German interlocutors underline that Germany shows a strong interest in governance and democratic support while France is rather sceptical towards a governance agenda and political conditionality (de Felice, 2016). France would appear strongly interested in security questions (especially in the Sahel region), whereas Germany seeks to maintain a neat distinction between the security and development portfolios.

Third, French interviewees perceived the German strategic vision as not always well palpable, also between the different administrations. This may again be linked to the German institutional setup, with different and relatively powerful ministries, which need to coordinate actions to come up with a “whole-of-government” vision. Together, with cultural differences regarding temporality (see below), this complicates Franco-German cooperation over long-term strategic topics.

*Cultural particularities: “temporality” and communication habits*

Last but not least, many interviewees (both from France and Germany) underlined different intercultural challenges arising from Franco-German collaboration in development cooperation. These can be systematised under two main aspects.

The first may be labelled “temporality” and refers to planning and timing habits. German interviewees described that the German administration tends to plan and prepare for events far ahead of time. Schedules are usually fixed early on and preparative documents mostly need to travel up the administrative hierarchy and back down again in a set order and timing. In France, by contrast, planning is more flexible, in that dates or events may change or evolve and documents are distributed more at short notice (see also Larat, 2015, p. 153; Bédécarrats, 2018, p. 3). The French flexibility is favoured by the presidential, that is, more hierarchical policymaking system. This allows France to develop new initiatives relatively quickly, driven by current events. Germany, by contrast, was seen as more focused and more long-term oriented, intensely reflecting on where and what it was doing well and then “putting the money there”. One of our interviewees who is involved in daily Franco-German cooperation in development underlined that, by the different calendars and timing (Germany starting to plan multilateral summits one year in advance; France not necessarily having finalised its planning one month ahead), contents and opportunities risk getting lost.

A second cultural aspect concerns communication and the sharing of information. On the one hand, communication tends to be rather ad hoc and oral in France, while it is more

explicit and written in Germany, as interviewees from both France and Germany point out (see also Larat, 2015, p. 154). On the other, information circulates more easily between the French institutions involved, especially between the ministries and the main implementation agency AFD. This is certainly linked to the more networked French way of working (Larat, 2015, p. 149). In Germany, the circulation of information is reportedly more hesitant between the BMZ and the implementing agencies, in both directions.<sup>22</sup>

In how far are these obstacles illustrated on the ground? This is what we will see through two case studies: the first on the Sahel Alliance, the second on the NDC Partnership.

## 4.2 Franco-German cooperation in support of global sustainable development put into practice

In order to answer the second of this study's two research questions, namely how the identified obstacles to Franco-German cooperation (diverging institutional setups, strategic visions, and cultural particularities) play out in practice, and to verify the conclusions of subsection 4.1, this subsection provides a two-fold analysis of the practice of Franco-German cooperation. The first case, the Sahel Alliance, founded in 2017 to enhance coordination and effectiveness in the five Sahel countries to the benefit of development and security, represents a mainly French "brainchild". The second case, the NDC Partnership, sealed at the COP22 in Marrakesh, Morocco following a German initiative, embodies a long-standing political commitment to fight climate change.

The case studies were chosen primarily for four reasons: i) the Sahel region and the topic of climate change both constitute issues currently high on the political agenda, as palpable in the 2019 Franco-German roadmap; ii) including them makes it possible to study one initiative coming from each of the two countries; iii) as we are focusing firstly on cooperation in a particular African region and secondly on a topic of global outreach, the nature of the initiatives differs, opening up a relatively encompassing research field while still providing overall comparability; and iv) both initiatives strive towards a pooling of projects and resources in the field, making them good case studies for analysing the co-ownership between the two countries.

### 4.2.1 Case study 1: the Sahel Alliance

The concept of the Sahel Alliance (SA) arose in France, nourished by a number of different developments in late 2016 and early 2017. On the one hand, the AFD was in search of ideas for making its cooperation more effective on the ground. The diagnosis was that the problems in the Sahel did not stem from a lack of financial resources available for development but from the need to improve the effectiveness of the countries' public policies and of international development aid as well as from the nexus between

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22 Various interviewees reported that this at times even leads to German implementing agencies seeking to pass a message to the BMZ via French institutions or receiving information from the AFD they would not receive from the German ministry.

security and sustainable development (Gravellini, 2018). Hence the idea of a Sahel Alliance materialised, an alliance that would seek to increase inter-donor coordination and base its actions on results. This idea then fed into the top political levels through two parallel developments: On the one hand, there was a series of high-level meetings between France and the World Bank in Autumn 2016/early 2017 on the problems of the Sahel, again leading to the insight that something had to be done. On the other hand, the AFD Director was on the plane of the French President on his first journey to Gao, Mali, in May 2017. There, they reportedly discussed the establishment of a Sahel Alliance.

France then reportedly approached Germany and the two agreed on the initiative; the European Union joined soon after. The SA was then officially set up on the occasion of the 10th Franco-German Council of Ministers, taking place on 13 July 2017 in Paris. Further, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank were involved early on. In 2018, six additional bilateral donors joined the initiative (Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) meaning that the Alliance has grown to twelve bilateral and multilateral partners. In addition, Sweden, Norway, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have observer status. The SA, according to the French Foreign Ministry, does not intend to be a new structure or financing entity, but a mechanism allowing coordination to be reinforced between the partners in the five Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) in order to render aid faster, more effective and better targeted (MEAE, 2018b).<sup>23</sup> The idea was not to generate “fresh money”, but to pool existing and planned funds and projects in order to increase effectiveness, coordination and visibility. At its inception, the Sahel Alliance stood for about 500 projects and initiatives with a sum of up to EUR 7.5 billion, of which 4 billion were for ongoing, 3.5 billion for planned projects.

In each country, the Alliance has identified especially vulnerable zones on which the donors put special emphasis. Further, five sectors of concentration were initially agreed upon (reportedly the ones having received most ODA or other official flows the preceding years): i) youth employment; ii) rural development, agriculture and food security; iii) energy and climate; iv) governance; and v) provision of basic services and decentralisation (Conseil des Ministres franco-allemand, 2017). The European Union then suggested adding the sixth one, security, taken up after some discussions in Autumn 2017.<sup>24</sup> For each of the six sectors, there is a working group over which one of the early members has taken the lead; France is piloting youth employment, Germany is in charge of decentralisation and the provision of basic services.

In the beginning (that is, from September 2017 to January 2018), the AFD ensured the coordination of the various working groups of the Alliance. French interviewees pointed

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23 While the idea of increasing effectiveness is far from new, the head of the Coordination Unit of the Alliance, Jean-Marc Gravellini, underlines that its implementation on the ground had proven very difficult, due to donors’ reflex reaction of “raising their own flag” (Gravellini, 2018).

24 According to our interviewees, France and Germany were both initially against the inclusion of security as a sixth sector of the Alliance.

out that members of the Alliance perceived this to potentially create conflicts of interest. That is why the Coordination Unit of the Alliance (Unité de Coordination de l'Alliance, UCA), formerly integrated into the AFD, was established as an independent secretariat with own human resources. The UCA is at the service of the twelve members of the Alliance in organising meetings, sharing documentation and overseeing project portfolios. Until April 2019, the UCA was financed by the AFD, then the BMZ took over through a GIZ project which receives co-financing by the European Commission.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the UCA office will move from Paris to Brussels.

#### *Divergent strategic visions and a different level of political attention*

The degree of political attention on the Sahel region is very high in France and the country clearly took the lead in setting up and enhancing the Sahel Alliance. In Germany, attention is also high, but not as intense and this creates distortions between the two countries. The German interest in the area is more limited and focused on migration issues. Accordingly, Germany has committed smaller amounts than France to the Sahel region.<sup>26</sup> What is more, while Germany was described as strongly committed at the beginning (tied to a congruence between the Alliance's five initial sectors and what Germany is already investing in the Sahel countries), this activism has faded somewhat.<sup>27</sup> On the French side, by contrast, interest for the Sahel zone is obviously higher and a special focus is laid on security issues and the fight against terrorism. However, these diverging visions are not specific to France or Germany: according to our interviews, different visions of the SA generally exist, also among the African countries, G5, and so on ("Everyone saw in the Sahel Alliance what he wanted").

#### *Different administrative cultures and temporality approaches*

Various interviewees observed in the SA an urgent approach on the French side to find fast implementation projects in the most sensitive areas, in order to take over once military interventions were completed. Germany's vision was less urgency-driven, but sought to link development cooperation to ownership as well as to political conditionality. The cultural differences mentioned above exacerbated the differing "temporal" approaches. Whether in interpersonal relations (between superior and subordinate), in relations to power, knowledge, information-sharing or in project management, German and French practitioners start from quite different positions (Bark et al., 2018). This also has consequences in the field regarding the sharing of information, where French practitioners meet agents of the KfW or GIZ who are not on the same level of information as the BMZ (see also de Cazotte, 2017, pp. 135, 139). In the case of the Sahel Alliance, the lesser

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25 One interviewee described that the idea of a Franco-German structure was present at the time when the UCA was created.

26 By contrast, Germany contributes significantly more to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa compared to France (EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, 2019).

27 Many interviewees tied this to the lengthy and difficult government-building process in Germany in late 2017/early 2018.

German political attention combined with the rather long-term orientation resulted in France assuming the lead role.

### *Diverging institutional setups*

The respective institutional setups play out in the Sahel Alliance in so far as (especially French) practitioners perceive difficulties in dealing with at least four different German interlocutors: the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, BMZ, KfW and GIZ. Moreover, in Germany there seems to be less coordination than on the French side, which is linked to the political priority given by each country to the Sahel Alliance. France has a more pyramidal system where arbitrations go to the Élysée and, in the case of Sahel Alliance, a more organised and regular coordination structure between the Ministry of Defence, the AFD and the Foreign Ministry's Directorate-General for Globalization, Culture, Education and International Development. In Germany, responsibilities between the German Federal Foreign Office (AA) and the BMZ in relation to the Alliance do not seem to have been completely clarified.<sup>28</sup> Interviewees further mentioned the lack of equivalence between France and Germany as regards several matters, which can have significant effects on the day-to-day work. For instance, the German Special Envoy for the Sahel represents (only) the AA while the Ambassador and French Special Envoy for the Sahel represents the entire French government. Further, France is represented by one Minister (the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs), while Germany has two Ministers (the Federal Foreign Minister and the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development).

### *A distortion regarding the approach to evaluation and tools for aid effectiveness*

The Sahel Alliance promotes an approach based on aid effectiveness and the factual impact on the population. However, according to French interviewees working on the ground, in terms of evaluation and results management, France is lagging behind its partners in general, and Germany in particular. While on the French side, the political will exists to monitor results or select projects, there is in actual fact less orientation on results on the ground. Implementation of such an approach is in its infancy compared to France's partners. Instead, France tends to focus more on the necessary outflow of funds to the region. A structural and revealing element of this approach is the fact that the teams in charge of evaluations at AFD are housed in the Research Division, rather than in the Direction of Operations. Germany is more structured on this point and has an external evaluation institute (Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, DEval) as well as standardised and relatively homogeneous procedures at its disposal (Bédécarrats, 2018, p. 14).

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28 Officially, responsibility for most of the five sectors lies with the BMZ, while the Federal Foreign Office is in charge of security.



#### 4.2.2 Case study 2: fighting climate change through the NDC Partnership

Both France and Germany have been repeatedly manifesting their intention to contribute to the cause of fighting climate change. In 2015, the Paris Agreement was signed by 196 countries at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), widely celebrated as “a momentous breakthrough and a civilising milestone in the history of the international community” (Messner, 2016, p. 4). In 2018, the French Parliament decided to incorporate the fight against climate change into the First Article of the French Constitution (Roger & Lemarié, 2018). Climate change also played a pivotal role in the G7 summit, which took place in Elmau in 2015 under the German presidency, as well as in German bi- and multilateral allocations in recent years (de Cazotte, 2017, pp. 125, 127; Bohnet, 2017, p. 9). With this high-level commitment and the importance both attribute to the topic in terms of funding, France and Germany are well-placed to contribute to the global fight against climate change.

Unsurprisingly, the two countries have been striving towards bilateral cooperation in climate change on both the meso and micro levels. At the meso level (policy coordination and/or joint policymaking), this was first put on paper in the Franco-German Agenda adopted in 2010 (Deutsch-Französische Agenda 2020 (2010), p. 5). In the context of the bilateral consultations of Meseberg in 2018, the two countries established a Franco-German inter-ministerial working group on climate change (Déclaration de Meseberg, 2018, p. 6).<sup>29</sup> In the 2019 Treaty of Aachen, the two countries commit to promoting ambitious measures against climate change and to develop joint approaches and strategies in order to implement the Paris Agreement (Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Französischen Republik über die deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit und Integration 2019, art. 18). The accompanying roadmap on development for 2019-2022 further lists various initiatives in which the two countries are engaged together in the field of climate change. Besides these bilateral initiatives, France and Germany have elaborated common positions on climate issues at the EU level, such as on development cooperation and climate (2017) or on the role of climate in the EU’s upcoming 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (2018).

On the micro level of project implementation, cooperation between the AFD and KfW has also been turning towards climate change in recent years: in 2009, they signed an agreement on the matter (together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA) and have been working on climate issues in multilateral bodies such as the IDFC or the Green Climate Fund. According to our interviewees, climate finance is explicitly underlined in the renewed MoU. A KfW head of department further stressed the fight against climate change as a common trait of both institutions (KfW, 2017).

There thus seems to be political momentum for Franco-German cooperation in the field of climate change. How does this cooperation work out in practice with a view to the various obstacles to Franco-German cooperation identified above? In order to answer this question, our second case study turns towards the NDC Partnership, an initiative for which Franco-German cooperation is to be stepped up according to the roadmap for 2019-2022.

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29 A first meeting of the working group took place in Paris in September 2018.

The concept of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) was introduced in the Paris Agreement of 2015. During the preparatory conferences and negotiations, differentiating the common climate change responsibilities was seen as a major challenge (Mbeva & Pauw, 2016, p. 3). Under the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, industrialised nations needed to expressly commit to mitigating climate change, while developing countries and emerging economies had not been obliged to make binding commitments (Messner, 2016, p. 5). In order to take all signatory countries on board – that is, developed, developing and emerging alike – a more flexible instrument was needed that would allow each country to set, implement and update its own climate commitment (IDDRI, 2015). Against this backdrop, the Paris Agreement stipulated that *each* signatory country should “prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve” (United Nations, 2015, art. 4, par. 2).

In order to assist developing countries and emerging economies in the elaboration and implementation of NDCs, the follow-up COP22 conference of November 2016 in Marrakesh launched the NDC Partnership (NDCP). The partnership was created on an initiative by the BMZ and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit, BMU), the Moroccan government, and the World Resources Institute (BMZ, 2017, p. 7). In July 2016, the German ministers for development and environment had already announced its creation at the occasion of the 7th Petersberg Climate Dialogue.<sup>30</sup> It seeks to support countries in the elaboration, implementation and review of national climate plans through three pillars of technical assistance, a support to facilitating access to finance and knowledge-sharing (NDC Partnership, 2018). By late 2018, the NDCP was active in almost 40 countries and three regional initiatives and, by January 2019, counted more than 100 members (BMZ, 2019). In 2017 and 2018, Germany and Morocco served as co-chairs of the partnership; at the COP24 of Katowice, they handed over the chairmanship for 2019 and 2020 to both Costa Rica and the Netherlands. Together with Australia, Denmark, France and the United Kingdom, Germany (through both the BMU and BMZ) finances a support unit to the NDCP, located mainly in the World Resources Institute in Washington DC, but also at the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bonn, Germany.

With regard to how Franco-German cooperation within the NDCP works out in practice, both the respective strategic visions and the institutional setups come into play, while our interviews did not point to obstacles stemming from cultural particularities.

### *High-level commitment, but sporadic working contacts*

While the two countries show early high-level commitment to the NDC Partnership and share an overall strategic vision as to the importance of climate change, both our French and German interviewees highlighted that working contacts remain sporadic and that

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30 The Petersberg Climate Dialogue (*Petersberger Klimadialog*) was held for the first time in 2010 in Bonn, following the international climate negotiations in Copenhagen, and has taken place in Berlin each year since.

exchange tended to be issue-driven and ad hoc. Germany was described as a very active co-founder who pushed the NDCP as one of two co-chairs in its initial two years. According to a 2018 BMZ report, the Federal Ministry for Environment has so far contributed EUR 76 million to support programmes through the NDCP and the BMZ 56 million (BMZ, 2018, p. 12). One German interviewee perceived both ministries as considering the NDCP a flagship initiative through which they aimed to show their strong engagement for the conception and implementation of NDCs. France was a founding member of the NDCP and soon started to become engaged, too, with its Minister and Secretary of State participating in the launch of the initiative in Marrakesh in 2016. Like Germany, it has been and continues to be on the NDCP's Steering Committee and has delegated a technical expert to the NDCP's Bonn office. Between 2016 and 2018, France contributed EUR 1 million to financing the NDCP's support unit and will provide follow-up funding of EUR 1 million in 2019. Although the German commitment and engagement may thus be higher, both countries show a continued interest in the topic of climate change and the NDC Partnership in particular.

This high-level political momentum on both sides is, however, not entirely transposed onto the working level. While German interviewees also saw difficulties in overcoming internal resistance to an increased cooperation – which naturally entails additional workloads and effort – this seems even more prominent in France. There, the AFD does not see sufficient incentives to become engaged in the NDCP. The NDCP's vision and added value for the AFD as an implementation agency is indeed not always evident. Whereas French interlocutors did clearly see the initiative's added value in lifting the topic of climate change and the nationally determined contributions to a high political level and in the production of high-end tools, studies and a powerful network, they nevertheless questioned the added value at the micro level of operational joint implementation. There, the AFD already has a well-established dialogue with partner country governments. Hence while the AFD participates in the NDCP, this is rather on an ad hoc, selective and demand-driven basis. Despite lobbying efforts by the MEAE towards the enhanced engagement of the AFD, it remains difficult for the main implementation agency to see sufficient incentives for becoming engaged in work-intensive additional coordination efforts. Nonetheless, according to our interviewees, additional efforts are being undertaken by MEAE and AFD to participate more actively in the NDCP.

Regarding Franco-German cooperation within the framework of the NDCP, this time Germany can be depicted as in the lead, like France in the case of the Sahel Alliance. French practitioners say that they have difficulties in evaluating the partnership and its potential impact. For the time being, France, acknowledging that the partnership is still relatively young, thus assumes a rather pragmatic stance, waiting for the initiative to produce more concrete results. Accordingly, German interlocutors feel that, while both the BMU and BMZ contribute dedicated budget lines to the NDCP and strive towards the systemic instruction of German embassies on the partnership, France could bring in more in terms of its bilateral portfolio.

#### *Different institutional affiliation of the NDCP in France and Germany*

Based on the two countries' institutional setups, the NDCP is in the hands of different institutions in France and Germany. In Germany, ministerial responsibility lies with both the BMU and the BMZ. According to our interviewees, both ministries attribute a high

priority to climate change and complement each other, with the former bringing in its contacts in the fields of climate and environment, and the latter the largest share of climate funding (between 80 and 90 per cent of German official international climate funding, BMZ, 2018, p. 11). However, in France, this has at times generated the impression that political steering swayed between the two ministries. While our German interviewees perceived coordination between the BMU and BMZ to work well, the literature points to a latent tension between the two at the international level (de Cazotte, 2017, p. 135) and an interviewed German think tank analyst spoke of “turf wars” in this regard. For Germany, *implementation* of the NDCP is technical-assistance based, so the GIZ is in charge.

In France, by contrast, the main responsibility for the NDC Partnership resides within the Foreign Ministry (in collaboration with the French Ministry for Ecological and Solidary Transition and other ministries). At the same time, France bestows an important role to its implementing agency AFD: the MEAE reportedly insisted that the AFD be permanently invited to the Steering Committee.

Ultimately, this generates a double incongruence between France and Germany: at the policymaking level, the German BMU and BMZ are jointly in charge, while the roles of each in the field of climate have not yet been clearly defined, whereas in France, the NDCP is in the hands of diplomats. At the implementation level, the relatively more political AFD, which tends to question the concrete value added of the NDCP at the level of project implementation (without, however, questioning its overall rationale), sees itself confronted with the mainly technical – that is, largely apolitical – GIZ (see also de Cazotte, 2017, p. 138). For this reason, the French AFD risks feeling that it does not have a suitable counterpart to deal with in respect to the NDCP, as the KfW is not involved.

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

At first glance, France and Germany – long-standing development partners and substantial ODA providers – should be particularly well-placed to work towards the implementation of the ambitious Agenda 2030, as they are linked by numerous bilateral cooperation and exchange formats in many policy areas. Since the signing of the Élysée Treaty in 1963, they have been striving towards closer coordination of their development cooperation, taken up in the recent Treaty of Aachen. At the moment, this is experiencing political momentum: In the context of the revised treaty, there is also a new roadmap on development for 2019 to 2022 which was to be signed by the ministers in Paris in late April. However, notwithstanding the ambitions expressed therein, these commitments call for reflection: preliminary insights point to the fact that cooperation is so far driven rather by opportunity than by strategy. That is why this study set itself a twofold research question: What are the main obstacles to Franco-German cooperation in global development? And how do these play out in practice?

In order to answer the former, this study sketched an analytical framework that drew inspiration from social constructivist research on norms, proposing that, after their signature, bilateral treaties still need to be brought to life through domestic implementation in order to fulfil their ambitions. Departing from an ideal top-down process of Franco-German cooperation and assuming that high-level political commitment is given (macro level), this study especially focused on how it was implemented at the level of policy coordination and

joint policymaking (meso level) as well as in project implementation (micro level). While Franco-German cooperation already works fairly well at both the multilateral dimension of the meso level (in joint positions or lobbying within international organisations such as the European Union or the OECD-DAC) and the micro level (such as in joint projects of their implementation agencies), it shows deficiencies mostly at the meso level of bilateral strategic and policymaking cooperation.

For the meso and micro levels, the study identified obstacles to Franco-German cooperation in global development. Structure-wise, the focus turned to institutional setups, that is, to who is involved in policymaking and policy implementation, a field where the two countries show significant differences: while Germany has a separate, yet comparatively weaker development ministry (BMZ), two more powerful ministries are in charge of French development cooperation. What is more, France has a powerful implementation agency (AFD), which increasingly participates in de facto policymaking. Regarding ideational aspects, the overall strategic visions need to be at least compatible, if not congruent, in order to allow common ground for policy initiatives to be found. Here, it can be resumed that France and Germany are in general on the same page, but with many different nuances. At both the policymaking and project-implementation level, cultural differences are expected to continue to play out in the day-to-day practice of cooperation. These relate, to “temporality”, with France working on far shorter schedules and deadlines than Germany, as well as to communication habits, with the French generally preferring oral over written forms, and the Germans vice versa.

Turning towards the second research question, how the identified obstacles play out in practice, the study further drew on two case studies, one on the Sahel Alliance (SA) and one on the NDC Partnership. As to the first case, the three categories of obstacles to Franco-German cooperation identified limit, to some extent, the advancement of the Sahel Alliance. First of all, differences in the strategic vision for, and the different degree of importance attributed to the Alliance result in a general imbalance between the role each country plays. While this does not constitute a constraint per se (as our interviews also pointed out cases where differences in the strategic vision could be complementary and thereby prove beneficial), the situation is exacerbated by differing administrative cultures and differing approaches to temporality. While France works with more flexibility and easily adopts event-driven initiatives thanks to its more short-term political calendar, the German way of working is more long-term oriented and planning more rigid. Last but not least, the diverging institutional setups are not necessarily of great help in overcoming Franco-German irritations. On the German side, there are reportedly at least four different actors involved (AA, BMZ, GIZ and KfW), while inner-German coordination is time-consuming and not always very transparent. On the French side, decision-making is faster and the system more pyramidal. In the case of the Sahel Alliance, this combination of factors resulted in France taking the lead.

The second case study focused on the NDC Partnership, launched in 2016 at the international climate conference in Marrakesh upon an initiative by Germany, among others. While both France and Germany show early high-level commitment to the initiative, the French AFD had doubts as to its added value at the operational level and therefore remains hesitant to become fully engaged. The German side to some extent laments the limited French engagement. Overall, in this case, Germany thus turns out as the lead partner in this joint initiative. This imbalance is reinforced by the fact that the NDCP lies in the responsibility of different institutions in France and Germany: while the

German BMZ and BMU are involved, two ministries that tend to have frictions as to their respective responsibilities at the international level, in France the NDCP is entrusted to the Foreign Office. The latter firmly advocated a strong role for the (relatively political) AFD, which has been co-assisting the Steering Committee since the beginning. The AFD is, however, confronted with the largely apolitical GIZ in which it does not really identify a suitable counterpart.

In sum, high-level commitment to enhancing Franco-German cooperation in global development has been continuous and repeated. Nonetheless, Franco-German cooperation does not yet live up to its ambitions. While cooperation works fairly well at both the meso level of multilateral development policy and the micro level of project implementation, it is at the meso level of bilateral coordination and joint policymaking where things get most complicated. Here, the three obstacles identified (institutional setups, strategic visions, cultural particularities) come into play most clearly and are interlinked in different ways. The respective institutional setups play out strongly in both cases studied. Overall, the incongruence between the institutional structures leads to a feeling of missing counterparts at both the policymaking (BMZ and MEAE not being real counterparts) and the policy implementation levels (AFD and KfW probably closest to being counterparts, while the AFD and the BMZ, and GIZ and Expertise France respectively are not). To a certain extent, the respective institutional setups can be assumed to shape a country's strategic vision, which equally plays out strongly in both case studies. Interestingly, neither France nor Germany succeed in sufficiently involving the respective non-initiating other, who, as a result, does not become a co-leading partner; this leads to deficient joint strategizing and hinders joint policymaking. All of this is exacerbated by intercultural differences regarding timing and communications, which were particularly prominent in the SA case and less so in the case of the NDCP. One explanation could be that, the more an initiative becomes close and concrete, the more cultural particularities come to the surface. Together, the institutional differences, the deficient exchange formats at the meso level and the cultural particularities lead to a lack of mutual knowledge, understanding and sensibility.

There thus clearly is a disconnect between top-level decision-makers and working-level ministerial staff. Based on our interviews, this is true for both countries, but especially for Germany, where decision-making is relatively speaking less hierarchical and more consensual among ministries. The ideal-type three-level process of Franco-German cooperation that this study assumed thus clearly gets stuck in the middle.

The scope of this study naturally has its limits. First, the choice of cases is to some extent biased as both cases represent initiatives that strive towards a pooling of tools and finance. Both thus stem from the realm of division of labour. A second option would be to investigate cases of joint action based on common positions. What is more, by investigating one case initiated by each country, there is an imbalance as to the countries' involvement from the beginning.

Second, the study's research design is, on the one hand, strongly interview-based; in other words, the generation of information and content depends upon the availability, personality

and openness of the interviewees, the last of which also has to do with the intercultural differences between the two countries. On the other hand, it concentrates mainly<sup>31</sup> on staff at headquarters, a fact that may have influenced the finding that cooperation tends to get stuck at the bilateral meso level to some extent. Further research should therefore investigate the perception of Franco-German cooperation by partner countries.

While overall the three categories of obstacles (strategic vision, institutional setups, cultural particularities) prove relevant to the analysis, they constitute hard-to-change national traits. That is why, in order to enhance Franco-German cooperation, ways of dealing with them and of alleviating their constraining effects need to be found. In this sense, this study puts forward five policy recommendations on the basis of its interviews and overall analysis:

**1. Safeguard the reiterated commitment from top political circles and the successful formulation of joint positions for multilateral development policy. Enhance the intense collaboration in policy implementation through, for instance, co-financing.**

The Franco-German cooperation is exceptional in its character because of its strategic political alignment at the highest political level, its collaboration in multilateral development policymaking, and its coordination at the level of implementation. In an international context of increasing national interests, this kind of collaboration should continue to be defended and strengthened. It is the result of decades of work, mutual alignment and reconciliation of strategic values. Maintaining this collaboration at the highest level is essential; otherwise, the policymaking and implementation levels will not work. The good coordination in implementation is an asset that should be especially encouraged.

**2. Translate the top-level political momentum onto the working level through a follow-up mechanism with concrete targets and the participation of agencies.**

In order to address the identified obstacles of differing strategic visions, each country's strategic vision should be made palpable and a propitious atmosphere for bilateral coordination should be created. To this end, both countries should make sure the top-level political momentum is translated onto the working level. Currently, however, incentives for desk officers to become engaged in time-consuming and possibly wearisome intercultural dialogue and coordination remain limited. The 2019 roadmap is a helpful document in this regard as it defines Franco-German priorities and includes an overview of both French and German as well as ongoing joint projects. Now, follow-up and monitoring need to be induced from a high level, detailing common goals and milestones to be achieved. On the German side and for the issue of climate change, the "Petersberg Dialogue on Climate" held by the German government each year could be taken as a point of departure for linking the meso level of (multilateral) policymaking and the operational (micro) level of project implementation.

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31 Of the total of nineteen, two interviews were conducted with staff working in the field.

To lift Franco-German cooperation beyond roadmaps, a regular, institutionalised follow-up mechanism would be helpful. In this context, French interlocutors suggested the Franco-British semi-annual exchange as a model, where each directors' meeting (between the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and MEAE) is followed up upon by means of a matrix detailing joint actions agreed so far. For each topic and initiative, this matrix indicates who is responsible for what, what progress has been made, and what the ensuing steps are. At each new meeting, French and British development directors evaluate the progress made and what is still to be achieved. For French and German cooperation, this could be transposed to the Franco-German Ministerial Council from where joint initiatives often originate or to the already existing yearly exchange between the BMZ and MEAE at a high political level (directors' level). This would further allow the clear delineation of the national, bilateral and multilateral levels, in order to make sure Franco-German room for manoeuvre is not restricted by broader multilateral undertakings.

According to French interlocutors, another advantage of high-level discussions with the United Kingdom is that the agencies and/or operators participate in the discussions, allowing political decisions to have a more direct impact at the implementation level. For the various policy sectors identified in the 2019 roadmap, such a follow-up matrix should define topical leaders (for instance, Germany for health and migration; France for peace, security and development as well as education) and spell out not only mid-term targets, but also follow-up mechanisms. Moreover, the German strategic vision in particular – which is at times not well detectable to French practitioners – could thereby become more apparent. Concretely, in the case of the NDCP for instance, this could prove beneficial in three ways: i) such a matrix could spell out accountability and monitoring tools, more clearly showing the operational added value; ii) it could lead to an intensified flow of information, and iii) a clearer vision of the respective roles of the involved institutions would ensue.

### **3. Promote mutual knowledge and trust between the French and German administrations involved through personnel exchanges and “deep dive” sessions.**

Naturally, cultural particularities and institutional setups cannot be changed easily, yet personnel can be made aware of and become familiar with them. To this end, mutual knowledge and trust should be increased. Various measures could be taken in this regard. First of all, priority should be given to the re-establishment of the exchange of personnel between the French Foreign Ministry and the German BMZ, as foreseen in the 2019 roadmap, but apparently so far hinging upon national constraints.

Even if exchange of personnel is limited to a small number of people per year, the exchanges should reach a sufficient number of civil servants cumulated over time to have an impact on mutual knowledge and trust. What is more, personnel from former exchanges will generate multiplier effects within their “home” administration and thereby help intercultural obstacles to be understood better and ultimately overcome.



In addition to this, there should be an institutionalised exchange between administrative staff of the institutions involved in both countries. French interviewees suggested their positive experience with “deep dive” formats with both US institutions and the World Bank<sup>32</sup> as a model to take up for both the Sahel Alliance and the NDC Partnership. On this occasion, according to interviewees, various French and US administrations (the Foreign and Defence ministries, development cooperation implementation agencies, and other governmental institutions involved) gathered in order to undertake a *tour de table* on different topics and problems. This would allow not only for an in-depth exchange on many issues, but would also mean that that people could become personally familiar with their respective counterparts. Currently, there are first encouraging signs that such an initiative may be started in the near future. This format, however, requires strong political will from both countries; it should be encouraged and facilitated by independent contributions from research institutes and other non-governmental actors from both countries. A third aspect which should be promoted further is the mutual recognition of procedures, as takes place between the AFD and the KfW. Again, such a demanding endeavour may need strong political attention and backing in order to succeed.

#### **4. Promote procedural best practices from both sides in order to achieve a balance between the two countries.**

In order to promote a balanced, respectful relationship, Franco-German collaboration in development cooperation could benefit from the identification and promotion of the procedural “best practices” of each country. France, for instance, could promote its model of inner-French coordination of institutional development actors, by which it manages to arrive not only at swift decision-making, but also at a well-working flow of information. According to French interlocutors, this has proved particularly beneficial in coordinating the French participation in the Sahel Alliance. The French best practice of interministerial working groups could help simplify the often burdensome inner-German coordination. Germany, by contrast, could propose its best practice of evaluation procedures, follow-up and monitoring project results, a field where France feels it lacks capacity and know-how and which is currently under focus as France prepares the reform of its law on development cooperation (Alimi, 2019).

#### **5. In the run-up to joint actions, decide systematically whether to share the work or to work towards a common position.**

Given the said obstacles to Franco-German cooperation, the two countries should focus on cooperating in areas where they share a common interest, such as Africa or climate change, and should postpone topics where one country is more invested than the other

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32 The “deep dive” of the World Bank consists of workshops, site visits, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and action planning with World Bank partners. In October 2018, such a “deep dive” took place, for instance, between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the World Bank on development issues in Tokyo, Japan. The meeting with around 130 participants served as an occasion for the two institutions’ staff to review their existing cooperation to work toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and seek new opportunities for future partnerships in areas of mutual interest (JICA, 2018).

(such as health, more prominent in Germany, or security cooperation, more prominent in France). In areas where they have a common interest, France and Germany should systematically consider whether to act jointly (as through providing joint statements at the multilateral level, as this study shows) or to divide the work (as in the case of the Sahel Alliance). Where there is a shared interest but common action is difficult due to the varying strategic visions, institutional setups and cultural particularities, the two should strive towards a division of labour, as strongly promoted by the European Union in recent years. For an effective division of labour, there has to be a framework with a common goal, otherwise France and Germany risk advancing in different directions without noticing this. The Sahel Alliance is an example of such a labour-dividing approach, with each country leading one field of action under a common goal; for the NDCP, the approach chosen has so far been less clear. On a general note, the decision of whether to divide the work or to act jointly so far appears neither conscious nor systematic (as in the case of the NDCP). In either case, as specified in the first recommendation above, each country's contribution and responsibilities should be spelled out for each sector of cooperation and on the basis of each country's comparative advantages. Franco-German cooperation would thereby become more balanced. A systematic choice between either a division of labour or common work would not only increase mutual sensibility, but most of all prove beneficial to the cause of global sustainable development.

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