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## **The Weimar Triangle: new-old cooperation horizon**

**The Weimar Triangle, a platform for cooperation between France, Germany, and Poland, is gaining importance as a forum for dialogue on security issues in Europe. The recent meetings of this format show a determination to strengthen trilateral cooperation, including through the extension of activities into new areas such as protection against disinformation or building social ties, among others. Moreover, the prospects for further joint initiatives are opened by the strong mutual economic relations between the countries – via both trade and investment.**

**Initiative.** The Weimar Triangle, or officially the Committee for the Promotion of French-German-Polish Cooperation, was established primarily with the aim of integrating Poland into European and transatlantic structures. From the outset, it was a non-formalised format of regional cooperation, without an extensive organisational apparatus or formal decision-making mechanisms. Cooperation within its framework was based primarily on irregular meetings, most often at the level of foreign ministers and heads of state.

Following the realisation of the key objectives related to Poland's integration into the EU and NATO, the Weimar Triangle continued its role as a kind of forum for dialogue, albeit used with varying intensity, depending on the current needs and political priorities of the three constituent states. There was a decrease in the activity of this format, especially between 2012 and 2021, when there were no meetings at the highest level (with the exception of an extended-format meeting with the Visegrad Group in 2013). In addition, there were likewise no meetings at the level of foreign ministers between 2017 and 2019.

**Mobilisation.** Top-level meetings within the Weimar Triangle resumed in early February 2022. In response to the threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, the leaders of the member states – French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Polish President Andrzej Duda – met in Berlin to discuss a strategy for de-escalating tensions. Subsequent meetings with the same line-up already took place during the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, successively in Munich and Paris – in February and June 2023. Both focused on strengthening cooperation and coordination in support of Ukraine.

A clear sign of the revival of this format was the Foreign Ministers' meeting on 12 February 2024 in La Celle-Saint-Cloud, France. At that time, the ministers of France, Germany, and Poland – Stéphane Sejourne, Annalena Baerbock, and Radosław Sikorski – explicitly underlined their determination “to give a new energy to trilateral cooperation.” Its key dimension became security issues, with a strong emphasis on combating Russian disinformation, which was considered the greatest and most immediate threat to regional stability, especially in the context of the upcoming European Parliament elections scheduled for June 2024. In response to these challenges, a decision was made to set up a special Weimar programme to warn against foreign disinformation activities.

The foreign ministers' meeting in La Celle-Saint-Cloud underlined the countries' desire to also strengthen the social dimension of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle. The initiatives announced, such as the 'Weimar of Citizens', the 'Weimar of Youth', the 'Weimar of Excellence', and the 'Weimar of Culture', aim to strengthen civic engagement in shaping cooperation within the countries of the format.

Solidarity with Ukraine was also emphasised once again, pointing to the determination of the Weimar Triangle countries to support its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and European and transatlantic aspirations. The willingness to hold an extended foreign ministers' meeting in the 'Weimar + Ukraine' format was also expressed. The Ukrainian issue was once again the focus of the subsequent extraordinary trilateral meeting, which took

place in March 2024 and was attended by French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

**Economy.** Franco-German-Polish cooperation is not limited to the political and social spheres, but is also – or perhaps primarily in terms of its intensity – economic in nature. Germany, France, and Poland – the first, second and sixth largest economies in the European Union, respectively – maintain strong trade links:

- In the Polish economy, Germany is the main destination for both exports (27.8%) and imports (19.8%). In contrast, France ranks third in Polish exports (6.1%) and eighth in imports (3.3%).
- In the German economy, France is the second export market (7.6%) and the sixth import market (5.1%), while Poland is the fifth export destination (5.8%) and the fourth import destination (6.0%).
- In the French economy, Germany leads in both exports (13.9%) and imports (12.0%), while Poland ranks tenth in both categories (exports 2.4%, imports 2.0%).

Moreover, an important element of trade between these countries is high- and medium-technology products. For example, Polish exports to Germany are dominated by electrical machinery and equipment, including batteries and accumulators, while exports to France are mainly mechanical machinery and equipment, including automatic data processing machines.

In addition to trade, the countries share equally strong investment ties. Germany and France are among the largest investors in Poland, considering the domicile of the group's parent company. In 2022, the balance of German investments in Poland amounted to more than PLN 230 billion and French investments exceeded PLN 108 billion. Poland – although not an equally large investor in Germany and France due to the differences in the size of the economies – is actively increasing its investment commitment, especially in strategic sectors. Polish investors in the German market include PKN Orlen, Ciech, Azoty, Boryszew, Comarch, Komputronik, or Asseco. Polish investors in France, meanwhile, include InPost, Nowy Styl, Comarch, and Chemet.

### Conclusions and perspectives

- Established in August 1991 in Weimar, Germany, the trilateral format for regional cooperation between France, Germany and Poland was a response to the challenges of a Europe undergoing profound political change at the time. More than thirty years after these events, the format is once again gaining prominence, demonstrating its ability to mobilise and coordinate action on key security issues in Europe. This is expressed not only through dialogue at the highest political levels, but also through an expansion of cooperation into new areas, including, for example, a disinformation warning programme. An important aspect of developing further cooperation in the Weimar Triangle is also the planned strengthening of the social dimension in trilateral relations.
- The foundation for further deepening trilateral cooperation is also provided by strong mutual economic relations between France, Germany and Poland – both in the area of trade and investment. In the context of the declaration of the Foreign Ministers following the La Celle-Saint-Cloud meeting, which underlined the need to strengthen the resilience, innovation, and competitiveness of European industry, the Weimar Triangle can play an important role in promoting and achieving these goals through further joint initiatives.
- Furthermore, an opportunity to strengthen relations within the Weimar Triangle is also provided by Poland's active role as the keystone of Central and Eastern Europe. Thanks to its strategic location and historical and cultural links with its neighbours, Poland can contribute to deepening dialogue and cooperation in the region, which will translate into supporting stability and security, both within the Weimar Triangle and Central and Eastern Europe more broadly.