



The French-German axis, a driving force for Global Health?

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The think tank "Santé mondiale 2030" has been in existence since October 2016. It brings together personalities involved in global health : Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, Paul Benkimoun, Michel Cot, Sana de Courcelles, François Dabis, Annabel Desgrées du Lou, Jean-François Delfraissy, Eric Fleutelot, Frédéric Goyet, Mathieu Lamiaux, Michel Kazatchkine, Marie-Paule Kieny, Lelio Marmora, Benoît Miribel, Olivier Nay, Louis Pizarro, Anna-Laura Ross. Stéphanie Tchiombiano is the coordinator.

The members of the group are individual members and not on behalf of their respective organizations. This document is the result of collective work within the group. It does not in any way commit, nor does it reflect the individual opinion of each member.

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Thanks to the dynamism of their communities of German and French national actors (public agencies, technical experts, researchers, and associations), the maturity of their health systems, and the international context, France and Germany have many assets to exert a strong influence on the international scene in the months and years to come. Strengthening the French-German axis of global health will make it possible to develop synergies, increase the two countries' capacity for influence and their shared effectiveness on the international scene, by leading their European partners towards a true « Europe of Health¹ ». By implementing the cooperation and integration agreements of the Aachen Treaty² in the field of health, the French-German duo must reaffirm the driving role of global health, based on human rights. It will thus be able to shape the multilateral architecture in global health and fight against the risks of withdrawal and the rise of populism exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.

The French-German axis, a driving force for global health

More than ever before, health issues must now be thought of on a global level, and the Covid-19 crisis is a painful reminder of this. As a pillar of the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDO), a factor of peace and economic growth, health already occupied an important place on the international scene, notably thanks to the growing involvement of France and Germany. This place will become central in the years to come. If the stakes are obviously health-related, they are also geopolitical in the uncertain environment we live in, marked by American and Brazilian positions on multilateralism and the WHO, Brexit or the rise of China. In this context, and in the face of the rise of populism and inward-looking attitudes, **it is not only important that France and Germany strengthen their ties and build more systematic strategic alliances, but it is also necessary for them to carry together, and with a strong voice, the values of humanism and solidarity that they share.**

It seems to us that **France and Germany share indeed a common interest, values and vision on global health.** They both give a central place to the fight against the three pandemics (AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria), to health systems strengthening, including community health systems, to access to care for vulnerable populations and to sexual and reproductive rights. France and Germany both consider that health is not limited to the health sector, that it must be approached in a transversal way, with its economic, social and international implications. Both countries also insist a lot in their speeches on the international scene on universal health coverage (both countries are co-founders of the “*Providing for Health*” initiative), on access to health as a common public good and on issues of gender and gender inequality³. The two countries do of course have their own specific topics (access to health products and mother and child health for France / the fight against antimicrobial resistance for Germany) or geographical specificities (Sahel and West and Central African countries for France / Eastern European and Central Asian countries for Germany), but both promote (1) a certain idea of global health, based on human rights and social justice, (2) an approach giving a central place to the State and universal health coverage, (3) political leadership at the highest level (by the President of the Republic in France, by the Federal Chancellor in Germany), (4) an active defence of multilateralism, in which both France and Germany invest financially⁴ and politically.

After a participatory process lasting more than 18 months⁵, Germany has just adopted a new global health strategy⁶. France is about to update its own strategy in a few weeks⁷. Due to the maturity of their respective health systems and the dynamism of their national stakeholder communities (public agencies, technical experts, researchers, associations, companies⁸), both countries have a lot of assets to exert a strong influence on the international scene. Strengthening the links that already exist (the *World Health Summit* is a perfect example of this) will further enhance their capacity to influence and their shared effectiveness on the international scene.

The involvement of both countries has been particularly decisive for global health in recent years: In 2017, Germany introduced global health in the agenda of the G20 that it chaired. In 2018, Germany, together with Ghana and Norway, launched the Global Action Plan (GAP) to strengthen collaboration between all international organisations involved in health. In 2019, France hosted the sixth replenishment conference of the Global Fund. In 2020, France and

Germany were particularly involved in the drafting and negotiation of the «Response to Covid-19» resolution adapted by the World Health Assembly. The German Presidency of the European Council⁹ provides an excellent platform to deepen this joint investment.

Why is the French-German axis of Global Health important?

The benefits of strengthening the French-German axis in global health are multiple, but five of them seem to us to be priorities:

1- Exchange on our respective approaches to global health

France and Germany have much to learn from each other in global health. France could, for example, share its experience in innovative financing (taxes on airline tickets and financial transactions), in coordinating research (with the example of the National Agency for Research on AIDS and Hepatitis (ANRS) which will include emerging infections as of 2021) or in research resolutely oriented towards countries with limited income (Research Institute for Development (IRD), network of Pasteur Institutes, French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), etc.). Germany, for its part, could go back over the construction of the «*Global Health Hub*» which it set up in 2019¹⁰, on the initiative of the Ministry of Health, and which brings together 200 partners from all sectors involved in global health (researchers, industrialists, decision-makers, representatives of civil society and the academic world, think tanks, etc.). The experience of the German Health Alliance¹¹ could also be a source of inspiration for French stakeholders. Relatively strong links already exist between ministerial teams, cooperation agencies¹², or in the field of research. The two countries are also, as we have already mentioned, at the initiative of the *World Health Summit*¹³. This conference is obviously an opportunity to strengthen the links between the actors of the two countries and to convey common messages.

Think tank proposal: Institutionalise strategic and political contacts in global health, through a sustained dialogue at the level of the French and German global health policy coordinators, and an annual joint voice at the highest political level. The systematisation of a meeting, bringing together researchers, decision-makers, civil society and think tanks from both countries, every year in the margins of the World Health Summit, could launch this dynamic.

2- Strengthening the place of health in the European dynamic

Enhanced cooperation between the two countries could stimulate the other 25 Member States to better coordinate and make health a priority on the European agenda, which it was not until then and is becoming on the fast track. The Brexit of February 2020 changed the balance of power at the European level. The Covid-19 crisis has also reshuffled the cards and put health back at the heart of national European and international priorities. This crisis calls for a collective, concerted and supportive response from the countries of the European Union. It also reveals weaknesses in scientific, operational and industrial coordination. The European Parliament now considers health as one of the priorities of the European Commission¹⁴ and the European Commission has demonstrated its willingness to play a leadership role by organising the donor conference for coronavirus vaccine¹⁵. France and Germany have pledged to support the creation of a European equivalent of BARDA¹⁶. European populations expect a Europe that is more protective of their health, more transparent and more regulatory. The European economic recovery plan has helped bring the two countries closer together¹⁷. The French President and the German Chancellor both called for a re-founding of the European strategy and for what they called «strategic health sovereignty¹⁸». The current status of health in the European treaties, which is a matter for the national level, can only evolve in the medium term and gradually, based on concrete progress that is readable by citizens. This must involve increasing research and development capacities for new health products, establishing common strategic stocks for certain sensitive health products, coordinating public procurement policies, setting up a working group to coordinate national responses within the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC¹⁹) and establishing databases that are comparable between member states²⁰. Over and above the international health crises which are currently the focus of attention, the health issues at stake at

the European level are numerous and important (monitoring the impact of various toxic substances, tobacco control regulations, European directives on food marketing, regulating access to medicines, reducing the impact of climate change, etc.).

Think tank proposal: take advantage of the EU presidencies of Germany (second half of 2020) and France (first half of 2022) to promote a clear mandate assigned to health for the European Commission, supported by a strengthened DG for Health and Food Safety and European agencies.

3- Strengthening scientific cooperation between France and Germany

The Covid crisis has presented the scientific community with an unprecedented challenge. Faced with the urgent need to find therapeutic and preventive solutions, the need to deploy a European dynamic seems obvious. Links between French and German health researchers exist (for example, joint research in the fields of antibiotic resistance²¹, AIDS or malaria, or the links between the Pasteur Institute and the Robert Koch Institute), but scientific cooperation between our two countries could be greatly strengthened. In addition to effective collaboration between research teams, it would also be necessary to develop a common political vision of research priorities and flexible, harmonised mechanisms to facilitate co-funding. In that respect, it is worth mentioning the French-German programme funding research in antibiotic resistance piloted in France by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI) via the National Research Agency (ANR), and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The European Union today accounts for almost a third of the world's scientific and technological production²², but the creation of an institutionalised French-German research community could stimulate a more dynamic European coordination, beyond what has been established by the Treaty of Lisbon²³ and the Horizon Europe joint programme²⁴.

Think tank proposal: (i) support the idea of creating a «European Health Research Council», (ii) systematise consultation meetings of research stakeholders.

4- Influencing global health governance

France and Germany would benefit from preparing together and coordinating even more systematically their positions on the boards of the global health organisations in which they participate. If this is done systematically within the UNAIDS coordinating council (where France and Germany occupy a common seat), and very regularly within the board of the Global Fund²⁵, synergies could be further developed within the Gavi Global Fund, the UHC2030²⁶ or, of course, the WHO. Both countries meet within several international initiatives (IHP+, *Global polio eradication initiative*, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, etc.) and agree in particular on the need to strengthen the role of the WHO. The recent initiative of Germany and Ghana (GAP), which led to the establishment of a global action plan to improve the coordination and cooperation of the international agencies involved in global health, for example, is an important subject on their common agenda, as is the reflection on the post-Covid international architecture of global health. Due to its scale and severity, the current crisis is likely to lead to significant changes in the institutional landscape of global health in the coming years. France and Germany have both positioned themselves as strong supporters of multilateralism, both calling for a strengthened role for the WHO. Together with their partners, primarily European, they will have to maintain their positions and defend the principle of an independent and constructive evaluation, against any political instrumentalization by either side.

Think tank proposal: (i) systematise the joint preparation of meetings of the governing board of multilateral organisations and (ii) further strengthen the links between the permanent representations of France and Germany in Geneva.

5- Putting global health on the international relations agenda

Until the Covid-19 crisis, health issues occupied a small place at international summits. Lively health-related debates sometimes occur in arenas that are not specifically dedicated to health, for example on access to medicines (patents, intellectual property), agriculture, the environment or global warming.

France and Germany are among those who did not wait for the crisis to bring health issues to the top of the agenda. France, Germany and the European Union are, for example, founders of the Sahel Alliance, created in 2017 to support the G5 Sahel countries²⁷. This initiative could be a catalyst for this privileged partnership between France and Germany, while remaining open to other actors. The Covid crisis is changing the international agenda and increasing the risks of withdrawal. France and Germany must ensure that health remains a high priority on the international scene. This is all the more important as health involves direct and indirect geopolitical, social and economic issues.

Think tank proposal: systematise the inclusion of the theme «global health» in the agenda of the various international events (it could, for example, be systematically included in the agenda of the Paris Peace Forum).

APPENDIX 1 - Presentation of Santé mondiale 2030

Santé mondiale 2030 is an independent think tank that has been bringing together personalities with a long history of involvement in global health issues since 2016. It places its reflections within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

OUR COMMITMENT

France is one of the largest providers of international health funding, but its influence in international bodies and health partnership platforms remains limited. We are convinced that France can only be heard and listened to in the international arenas of global health when its actors succeed in conveying a strong and coherent message, structured around clear and stable objectives, supported by values that are attached to the history of health in France.

Our objective is to **formulate recommendations** on France's global health policy and to mobilize all stakeholders so that health issues become a strategic focus of French international aid.

OUR PREVIOUS NOTES

- 1- [White Paper on Global Health](#)
- 2- [Our vision of Global Health](#)
- 3- [Health is a priority for the Sahel](#)
- 4- [Breathing new life into the fight against tuberculosis](#)
- 5- [Malaria Business](#)
- 6- [Contribution to the preparation of the next Global Fund Replenishment conference](#)
- 7- [The French institutional framework for Global Health: reflections and proposals](#)
- 8- [The existence of a European Commissioner for Health is essential for the health of Europeans](#)
- 9- [UNAIDS: what stakes, what future?](#)
- 10- [Structuring the academic field of Global Health in France](#)

OUR MEMBERS

Santé mondiale 2030 brings together personalities who have long been involved in global health, such as Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, Paul Benkimoun, Michel Cot, Sana de Courcelles, François Dabis, Annabel Desgrées du Lou, Jean-François Delfraissy, Éric Fleutelot, Frédéric Goyet, Mathieu Lamiaux, Michel Kazatchkine, Marie-Paule Kieny, Lélío Marmora, Benoît Miribel, Olivier Nay, Louis Pizarro, Anna-Laura Ross, Benoît Vallet. Stéphanie Tchiombiano is the coordinator.

Our vision of Global health

Global health is a fundamental human right. It is also a global common good. Universal access to health and the construction of sustainable health systems are central to human development, the economy and the fight against poverty, as well as security. They therefore make a decisive contribution to the inclusive development of societies and to peace.

Health issues are complex and require long-term strategic visions to address the challenges posed by globalization, increased human trade, demographic transitions or climate change.

APPENDIX 2 – Notes and references

¹ The concept of Europe of Health raises many questions. In order to set up a more ambitious «Europe of Health» than the one that the treaties have already allowed to be built, it would be necessary to work on the scope of the actions to be undertaken and to specify the fields in which the European dimension can be an asset for the member countries: research, risk management, monitoring, health promotion, etc.

² Signed on April, 22 2019, the Aachen Treaty ([available here](#)) is a treaty of cooperation and integration between France and Germany. It comes exactly 56 years after the Elysée Treaty, which it aims to complete. In particular, it provides for the approximation of the economic, diplomatic and defence policies of the two countries. Article 18 of the treaty, which entered into force on January, 22 2020, stipulates that the two States shall work to strengthen the process of implementing multilateral instruments relating to sustainable development, global health and environmental and climate protection, in particular the Paris Agreement of 12 December 2015 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

³ We can mention here the French announcement of what Emmanuel Macron calls «feminist diplomacy», the hosting in France of the Generation Equality Forum and the regular speeches of Angela Merkel on this theme. Angela Merkel was also awarded the International Gender Equality Prize founded by the Finnish government in March 2018.

⁴ France and Germany are respectively the 2nd and 4th historical donors to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria ([source: Global Fund](#)). In 2019, 72% of France's official development assistance in global health has been channelled through multilateral organisations, compared to 62% of Germany's official development assistance in global health ([source IHME](#)).

⁵ Kickbusch I, Farrar J, Challis M. A new global health strategy for Germany. *BMJ*. 26 July 2019;l4662.

⁶ Germany has just adopted a new global health strategy. Developed following a participatory process that lasted more than 18 months, the new strategy, entitled «Responsibility, Innovation, Partnership : Organising Global Health Together», sets 5 priorities for the period 2020-2030 : 1) health promotion and disease prevention, 2) a joint environment/climate/health approach, 3) health systems strengthening, 4) health protection and combating international health crises, and 5) promoting research and innovation. The new strategy is [available here](#).

⁷ The current strategy covers the period 2017-2021 ([available here](#)).

⁸ Germany is also very active in economic diplomacy, with its «*German healthcare partnership*», which can be considered a big brother of the French brand «*French HealthCare*» created in 2017.

⁹ German Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July to December, 31 2020. The programme is [available here](#).

¹⁰ Green A. Germany's Global Health hub. *The Lancet*. March 2019;393(10174): 862.

¹¹ <https://gha.health/en/>

¹² The French (AFD) and German (KfW) operators signed a partnership in August 2019 which provides for several levels of enhanced collaboration at strategic, operational (recognition of their respective procedures), knowledge sharing and joint communication levels. Several topics for joint reflection have been defined: aid effectiveness, the international climate agenda, and strengthening the European cooperation system ([source](#)).

¹³ An international conference with thousands of global health experts in Berlin every year. More information is available [here](#).

¹⁴ In a [resolution adopted on July, 10](#), the Parliament called for the establishment of a European Health Union, whose strategy would be based on the following principles: the creation of common minimum standards for quality health care, based on resistance tests of Member States' health systems to identify their weaknesses and prepare them for future health crises ; the establishment of a "European Reaction Mechanism" to respond quickly and effectively to health crises through increased coordination and better management of the strategic stockpile of medicines and medical equipment; facilitating affordable access for all to vaccines and treatments against Covid-19 as soon as they become available; implementing the "health in all policy areas" approach, bringing together the health dimension of areas such as agriculture, transport, international trade, research, environment and climate protection.

¹⁵ On May, 4 2020, the European Commission organised a global online donor conference which raised €7.4bn to develop and distribute coronavirus diagnostic tools, treatments and vaccines worldwide.

¹⁶ Attached to the US Ministry of Health, the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) is an agency for the research and development of health products, created in 2006 to combat chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, as well as pandemic influenza and emerging infectious diseases. Ms Van Der Leyen announced in September the creation of the European equivalent of the BARDA.

¹⁷ On May, 18 2020, France and Germany proposed a joint initiative for European recovery, including the creation of a European recovery fund for solidarity and growth, which will be endowed in July 2020 with a total amount of €750 billion in subsidies. This agreement establishes for the first time the principle of a common debt in the name of all the Member States.

¹⁸ Speech of May, 18 2020, by Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel, [available here](#).

¹⁹ The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control was established in 2005. It is an EU agency with the aim of strengthening Europe's defences against infectious diseases. The Centre's mission is to identify, assess and communicate current and emerging threats to health from communicable diseases.

²⁰ This health sovereignty would have 5 dimensions : 1) Increasing research and development capacities in the field of vaccines and treatments, as well as coordination and financing at the international level (ACT-A Initiative); 2) Constitution of common strategic stocks of pharmaceutical and medical products (protective equipment, test kits, etc.) and development of production capacities for these products in the European Union; 3) Coordination of European policies on common public procurement for future vaccines and treatments (e.g. manufacturing and storage of potential future vaccines) in order to speak with one voice to the pharmaceutical industry and ensure more efficient European and global access; 4) Setting up an EU Health Task Force within the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to work alongside national institutions to develop plans for preventing and responding to future epidemics; 5) Defining common European standards for interoperability of health data (e.g. a harmonised methodology for comparable statistics on cases during epidemics).

²¹ In particular, Germany played a key role in the creation of the "Global AMR Research and Development Hub", now based in Berlin, to coordinate international efforts and initiatives dedicated to the subject.

²² "The European Research Policy", [available here](#).

²³ The Treaty of Lisbon currently provides a framework for the functioning of the European Union. Adopted in 2009 after the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TECE), it radically adapts the rules of the old treaties to allow for better coordination between member states.

²⁴ The Horizon Europe Programme is the European Union's framework programme for research and innovation for the period 2021 to 2027. It replaces the Horizon 2020 programme. With a budget of €80.9 billion for the period 2021-2027, it has the following objectives: 1) to strengthen the Union's scientific and technological bases; 2) to boost its competitiveness, including that of its industry; 3) to implement the Union's strategic policy priorities; and 5) to contribute to addressing global issues, including sustainable development objectives.

²⁵ France and Germany shared a common seat for two years when the Global Fund was created. The two countries regularly share common positions, notably on the importance of health systems strengthening or the role of CCMs. The two technical assistance mechanisms linked to the Global Fund (Back Up Health / Initiative 5%) also work very closely together.

²⁶ Both countries actively participated in the development of the "Vision paper" on universal health coverage of UHC2030.

²⁷ The Sahel Initiative aims to mobilise investment and resources more effectively in order to improve partners' support for stabilisation, poverty eradication and long-term development in the region. At the G7 summit in 2019, France and Germany launched a pact for the security of the Sahel, reaffirming their commitment.