

## **Joint Statement by the Ministers for European affairs of France, Germany and Poland**

### **on the occasion of the Weimar Triangle meeting in Paris and Yvelines Department**

**on the 28 and 29 April 2024**

On the occasion of our meeting in Weimar Triangle format in Paris and in the Yvelines department, on 28 and 29 April 2024, we, the Ministers for European affairs of France, Germany and Poland, reaffirm the importance of cooperation between our three countries and the role of the Weimar Triangle as a driving force in Europe, in developing ideas for a strong and resilient Europe and in launching concrete initiatives. Europe's unity and cohesion are its greatest strength, particularly at a time when Russia is seeking to destroy the European peace order and movements hostile to democracy are shaking the foundations of European values. As stated by the Foreign affairs ministers of our three countries at their meeting at La Celle-Saint Cloud, on 12 February this year, we are determined to intensify our coordination within the Weimar Triangle to serve an ambitious program of action in Europe. Strengthening our cooperation within the Weimar Triangle also means strengthening solidarity and understanding between our fellow citizens, particularly young people.

Together, we will focus our efforts notably on supporting Ukraine, promoting rule of law, combating disinformation and fostering cultural and civil society cooperation and exchange.

#### **Ukraine**

We recall our unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Russian aggression must be defeated. We underline our determination to continue providing Ukraine and its people with all the necessary political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed.

We intend to hold a joint meeting of ministers for European affairs in the Weimar format, together with our Ukrainian counterpart in Ukraine in the near future.

We will also continue to provide all relevant support to the Republic of Moldova, which keeps being affected by Russia's unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine, including by continued disinformation and destabilization campaigns.

Recalling the conclusions adopted by the European Council on 21 and 22 March 2024 and based on the commendable achievements of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova on their EU path, we suggest that the European Commission provides the Council with an updated assessment ahead of the 25 June General Affairs Council to facilitate the adoption of the negotiating frameworks for the formal opening of accession negotiations by the end of the Belgian Presidency.

#### **Rule of law**

We reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental values of the European Union as laid out in the Treaty on the European Union.

Among them, the rule of law requires that all public powers act within the constraints set out by law, in accordance with the values of democracy and the respect for fundamental rights. It includes a functional judicial system with adequate human and budgetary resources, an efficient and comprehensive anti-corruption framework, constitutionally enshrined checks and balances and goes hand in hand with freedom and pluralism of the media. It remains the foundation on which our Union is built.

We reaffirm our commitment to protect the rule of law through the different tools at our disposal. This includes an effective procedure under article 7 of the TEU, the regulation on financial conditionality and the annual report on the Rule of Law. We support the work done by the Commission and the Council to properly implement these tools. Protecting and strengthening the rule of law should remain a priority for the next Commission mandate.

In this context, the participation of Member States in the European Public Prosecutor's Office will strengthen the protection of the European Union's financial interests and the contribution of the EPPO to the preservation of the rule of law. France, Germany and Poland call all Member States to join the EPPO during the next Commission mandate.

We are committed to making the enlargement of the European Union a success and to helping candidate countries step up the necessary reforms, notably in the area of rule of law, in line with the merit-based nature of the accession process and with the assistance of the EU, with a view to strengthening our Union. On the path to the European Union, to fully meet the Copenhagen Criteria, we recall that maintaining our common values is one of our most important tasks. It is and will remain absolutely vital to ensure the credibility of our procedures and to be uncompromising on the respect of the values of the Union. We encourage, in this respect, all countries covered by EU Enlargement Policy to intensify their reform efforts and implement all necessary steps.

## **Disinformation**

2024 is a year of major elections, in Europe and beyond. We will not tolerate any attempts to interfere in our democratic processes.

We have set up a Weimar alert and response scheme between France, Germany and Poland on information manipulation and we will work towards further EU coordination and active response in this field, especially with a view to ensure swifter and more effective actions by online platforms to combat disinformation campaigns, as well as by fostering work by civil society to strengthen media literacy and resilience. In this context, we call on our national institutions promoting civic education, media literacy and resilience to reinforce their cooperation.

We call upon the Commission to make full use of its competencies under the Digital Services Act, in particular to watch over the full implementation of its guidelines for providers of very large online platforms and very large online search engines, to ensure risk mitigation particularly with a view to the upcoming European elections. Continued support for the civil society's involvement in making the DSA effective is of utmost importance.

We are convinced that a European media platform, such as ARTE, would contribute to countering disinformation by providing high quality information to all EU citizens.

Together with positive communication about the European Union and its achievements, public denunciation of disinformation and fake news is one of the main levers in the fight against disinformation attacks. In this context, particular attention should be given to disinformation campaigns discrediting EU's enlargement policy and spreading misinformation both in EU Member States and candidate countries.

Over the past few months, several disinformation networks have been detected and exposed, such as the "RRN/Doppelgänger" network that has been exposed by France in June 2023, with additional evidence provided by Germany in January 2024. This is also the case of the "Portal Kombat" network that has been exposed by France ahead of the last Weimar meeting of Foreign ministers on 12 February, and which consisted in 193 pro-Russian propaganda websites targeting Ukrainian territories and seven Western countries, including France, Germany and Poland.

Our countries continue to detect disinformation operations:

- On the one hand, further investigation by the French agency VIGINUM led to the detection of 31 new domain names created between March 20th and 26th and belonging to the "Portal Kombat" network. With these new websites, the propaganda network now targets almost all EU member states and is deploying in Asia and Africa.
- On the other hand, the Polish Internal Security Agency, as a result of international cooperation between and a number of security services, including the Czech Information Security Service (BIS), conducted a series of searches, detentions and interrogations. Those procedural steps revealed a Russian network conducting disinformation activities and other influence operations through a portal called *Voice of Europe*. The operation's goal was to weaken the support towards Ukraine and discredit the image of European Union in EU Member States in the context of the upcoming European Parliament elections.

We will remain vigilant and determined to disclose and respond to these malicious activities. Together with all EU governments, institutions and civil society, we must make every effort to strengthen our defenses and continue to expose such operations. We suggest that the Belgian Presidency puts this point on the agenda of the 21 May General Affairs Council.

### **Cultural, academic and civil society cooperation**

On the occasion of the 12th February Foreign Ministers' meeting, France, Germany and Poland have decided to launch new initiatives to foster cooperation between civil societies, ahead of European elections (Weimar of citizens), in the fields of culture (Weimar of culture) and higher education and research (Weimar of excellence), with particular attention paid to youth empowerment (Weimar of Youth).

We are committed to deepening our cultural cooperation. We intend to help artists from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia who fled war or authoritarianism and found shelter in France, Germany or Poland and enable them to create in the best conditions, with artists residencies in our 3 countries.

We will strive to give a decisive impulse to academic cooperation, for instance through common summer programs of excellence between European universities alliances involving our three countries.

We will develop initiatives to enhance cooperation between the French-German youth office (FGYO) and the German-Polish youth office (GPYO) starting in 2024. We envisage events bringing together young people from France, Poland and Germany. Participants should thereby reflect on the future of the Weimar Triangle from both the trilateral and European perspective, based on common values and the principle of youth empowerment and inclusion.

### **Enlargement and reforms**

In the context of upcoming strategic discussions on the future of Europe, we addressed the issue of enlargement and reforms. As the EU marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its largest enlargement in history, expanding by ten Member States, we reconfirm that enlargement is a geo-strategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity. A larger Union has greater geopolitical weight and influence on the global stage, including as an economic partner. Looking ahead to the prospect of a further enlarged Union, both the European Union and future Member States need to be ready. Work on both tracks should advance in parallel.

France, Germany and Poland will work together on EU internal reforms, which should draw on our long-term ambitions and the ways to achieve them. We will address key questions related to our priorities and policies as well as our capacity to act. This will make the EU stronger and will enhance European sovereignty.