



JOINT STATEMENT
(DRAFT)

Calling for the Creation of a 'Weimar Triangle of Innovation'
*Polish-German-French cooperation in Science and Technology
for enhancing European Competitiveness*

In light of continuing fiscal and financial crises, the political discourse in Europe is being dominated by issues of public debt, financial market turbulence, and the fear of multidimensional uncertainty. At a time critical for shaping the economic, political, and social future of Europe, however, it is of utmost importance to focus on laying the foundations of competitiveness and long-term growth.

Targeted investments in research and innovation, as well as respective political measures, have demonstrated themselves as key factors for securing the competitiveness of companies and national economies worldwide. In addition, research is an indispensable provider of solutions in response to the societal challenges of today and tomorrow. National approaches in this direction, however, no longer suffice. On the global scale, individual European countries are too small to meet the challenges of global competition. Europe as a whole will have a chance to prosper in the world of tomorrow only if it makes best use of its full, joint innovation potential.

At the level of the European Union, policy action is clearly pointing in this direction. Most prominently, the *Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* – building upon the preceding *Lisbon Agenda* – seeks to build an economy based on knowledge and innovation by attaching high priority to joint European efforts in research and innovation. In this context, the *Innovation Union* flagship initiative of *Europe 2020* aims to "complete the European Research Area, to develop a strategic research agenda (...), and to enhance joint programming with Member States and regions." The *European Framework Programmes for research and technological development* – including the *Horizon 2020* programme currently under debate for the 2014-2020 period – are supporting these objectives. In addition, initiatives towards reinforcing a targeted use of European structural funds for research and innovation activities are being discussed.

The successful work of intergovernmental schemes such as ERAC (European Research Area Committee, formerly CREST) as well as a multitude of complementary bilateral cooperation programs and joint programming initiatives decisively add to these achievements. Notwithstanding such indispensable efforts on various political levels, the potential for European research and innovation cooperation remains underutilized due to a variety of structural barriers. Most critically, many national research systems lack effective openness for researchers and institutions from other European countries.

In order to tap the full potential of European research and innovation, a speedy and resolute completion of the European Research Area (ERA) is an indispensable requirement. In the first place, an open European labour market for researchers with transparent recruitment procedures and efficient modalities for the recognition of degrees and qualifications needs to be completed so as to favour cross-border mobility and to allow for an effective matching of complementary resources and competencies as a collective advantage. For that purpose, cross-border accessibility and portability of competitive national grants as well as enhanced mechanisms for cross-border knowledge transfer are of equal importance.

In light of these challenges, we are convinced that France, Germany, and Poland more than 20 years partners in the 'Weimar Triangle', are ideal partners for piloting their joint contribution to the process of completing the ERA.

Firstly, due to the complementarity of our countries' research resources and competencies, a targeted removal of the remaining barriers and an effective implementation of systemic interoperability would be particularly beneficial in the French-German-Polish context; the recognition of this potential is illustrated by a remarkably strong level of interest in trilateral cooperation among individual researchers and research institutions from the three countries. Secondly, the pursuit of a joint French-German-Polish approach towards optimizing European collaboration in research and innovation would constitute a meaningful building block in enhancing the 'Weimar Triangle', the importance of which the political leadership of France, Germany, and Poland has repeatedly highlighted. In both regards, an intensified French-German-Polish cooperation can be expected to unfold catalyzing functions for the EU as a whole.

In the framework of the 'Weimar Triangle', the potential for research and innovation cooperation is until now underutilized. Complementarities remain unexploited. Most dramatically, Poland's important human innovative potential stays way below its means due to an apparent lack of integration into European research and innovation networks. In order to overcome this wasteful inefficiency, it will be vital to move beyond partnerships between individual researchers and to pursue a strategic approach that reconciles the concrete interests of scientists and companies with strategic, political considerations.

We therefore call upon the political leadership of France, Germany, and Poland to initiate and sponsor the development and implementation of a joint strategic approach aiming to

- consolidate the competencies of research institutions and companies from the three countries,
- promote trilateral cooperation projects focused on societal challenges faced by all three,
- foster processes of mutual learning, so as to continuously improve forms of research and innovation cooperation within the EU 27.

The governments should be invited to entrust the realization of such concept to a tripartite consortium consisting of one specialized institution from each country.

In order to leverage the respective political momentum and to provide for an active involvement of the broader scientific and business communities, an Advisory Council shall be established consisting of leading scientists, industry representatives and innovation policy specialists from the three countries.

A French-German-Polish trilateral strategic approach shall actively invite participants and contributors from other EU member states. In the light of the trilateral experience gained, an enhanced model for trans-national cooperation in research and innovation could thus be continuously expanded to include additional EU partners, and ultimately the EU as a whole.

Finally, in order to mobilize the necessary political visibility of the importance of the issues at stake, it is suggested that the proposed mobilization of the scientific and technological potential of the three partner countries, France, Germany and Poland within the framework of the 'Weimar Triangle' should find its place on the agenda of the next Weimar summit meeting.

14/08/2012