

Respect the past but look towards the future

**Polish, French and German perceptions of
the Weimar Triangle and its role in the EU**

Jacek Kucharczyk



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The Weimar Triangle as a platform for cooperation between Poland, Germany and France was set up by the countries' foreign ministers at a joint meeting in Weimar in August 1991. The leading idea of this initiative was to support the unification of Europe after the divisions of the Cold War. The Paris-Berlin-Warsaw axis of cooperation was to support the process of reconciliation between the East and West of Europe, overcoming mutual prejudices and barriers to community building. The successful process of the enlargement of NATO and EU structures confirms the effectiveness of political efforts and cooperation formats such as the Weimar Triangle. Since the beginning of this platform's existence, the importance of people-to-people contacts, scientific and cultural exchanges have been emphasised. This has been confirmed by numerous trilateral youth exchanges, scientific projects and cooperation at local government level.

The Weimar Triangle is based on a political declaration, it has no permanent structures, secretariat or even fixed meeting dates. Its significance depends primarily on the political will of the current authorities. A meeting of foreign ministers was held to mark the 30th anniversary of the Triangle, but it had been eight years since the last meeting of ministers (for European affairs). In this format, both internal conflicts and common challenges facing the entire European Union are the subjects of focus. At present, these are – first and foremost – the fight against the pandemic and its consequences and the challenge of a fair energy transition and industrial change, without which we will not save our common planet from the devastation resulting from climate change. Other topics include the need to renew transatlantic relations and ensuring security in Europe in the face of growing threats.

Anniversaries are also a good opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges of a given project. Hence, the idea to conduct surveys in Poland, Germany and France, during which we asked respondents about their assessment of relations in this trilateral constellation and their perception of the significance of this cooperation for further European Union integration. We also asked about personal experiences in contacts with people from Poland, Germany or France and about familiarity with the Weimar Triangle format. The results of the survey conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs on the initiative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and in cooperation with the Genshagen Foundation are presented in the report below.

At a Glance

- › The public's interest in European and international politics varies across the three countries. A majority of German and Polish citizens declare their interest. Interest is considerably weaker in France, especially in comparison to Germany.
- › Support for EU membership is strongest in Poland, followed by Germany. Just half of the French respondents support their country's EU membership, with the undecided representing the second largest group. The percentage of opponents of membership is highest in France (21%), followed by Germany (16%) and is lowest in Poland (9%).
- › Pluralities (but not majorities) would like to see more powers returned to member states to safeguard national sovereignty.
- › Strengthening EU competences is supported by around one third of respondents in each country. In Poland, the percentage of respondents supporting strengthening EU competences is comparable to those who would like to see some powers returned to the national governments.
- › German and French perceptions of the benefits of membership are relatively similar and differ from the Polish perceptions. The three most popular benefits indicated in Poland (freedom of movement, prosperity and economic growth) are less appreciated in both Germany and France, while Poles less often than Germans feel that EU a membership improves Poland's international standing and relations with other countries. A relatively high percentage of the French respondents cannot indicate any benefits of membership.
- › The respondents of all three countries indicate that Germany and France are two of the three most influential countries in the EU. Only 12% of Poles and even fewer German and French respondents think that Poland is among the three most influential member states.
- › The publics in all three countries think that democracy and human rights, as well as high levels of prosperity, unite the citizens of the EU more than shared culture and religion.
- › Clear majorities in all three countries consider the USA an important partner of the EU, with the French being relatively the most sceptical.
- › The UK and Canada are perceived as important partners in all three countries, while the perceptions of Japan and India are more ambiguous.
- › The respondents in all three countries are quite divided in their perceptions of Russia and China and there are no clear pluralities in regard to either country. Roughly similar percentages see Russia and China as partners and as strategic

rivals of the EU, with nearly one third of respondents choosing a neutral rating. The most sceptical views on Russia are in Poland, while China is viewed most critically in France.

- › There is an asymmetry between Germany and France on one hand, and Poland on the other as concerns mutual interest in the other countries' state of affairs. The Germans and the French feel relatively well informed about each others' domestic politics and society. In contrast, the interest in Polish affairs in Germany and, especially, in France is conspicuously lower.
- › Relatively few Polish, German and French respondents would consider living in one of the other two countries. The largest percentages are Poles who would move to Germany (23%) and Germans who would move to France (19%).
- › Germany seems to be the most popular destination for student exchange programs as 16% of both the Polish and French respondents have participated in such an exchange or have a relative who has. France is popular with Germans but less so with Poles, while the smallest but still notable groups of the French and Germans have studied in Poland. The percentages are considerably higher for the youngest respondents.
- › A considerable part of the public opinion in the three countries is aware of partnerships between their regions or towns with partners in one of the other two countries. The awareness of Franco-German and German-Polish cooperation is higher than in the case of Polish-French partnerships, and relatively few respondents in all three countries can point to concrete outcomes of such partnerships.
- › Germans and Poles see Polish-German relations as important for European integration (with a majority of Poles rating them as very important). The French public is more ambiguous and nearly half of the respondents feel unable to answer this question, with a plurality (29%) stating that they are somewhat important.
- › Franco-German relations are seen as important by clear majorities of Germans, Poles and the French, with small minorities stating they are not important. Interestingly, more Poles (48%) than the French think these relations are very important.
- › Franco-Polish relations are viewed as important in Germany and in Poland but less so in France, where just 7% think they are very important.
- › A majority of the French and nearly half of the German respondents have never heard the term "the Weimar Triangle", while only 12% of Germans and 4% of the French say they know what it refers to. On the contrary, a majority of Poles say that they have at least heard this term, and as many as 24% say they know its meaning.
- › Strong majorities in Poland and Germany think that Weimar Triangle cooperation is important for EU integration and agenda setting. The number is significantly lower in France, where 48% think that Weimar Triangle cooperation matters, and just 11% consider it very important (less than half of the percentages in Germany and Poland).

- › Most Poles (52%) and more than one third of Germans (36%) agree that the Weimar cooperation should be strengthened in the future, whereas the French remain somewhat less convinced (27%). Nonetheless, only a small minority in each country would like to see less cooperation.
- › There is significant support for Weimar Triangle cooperation in a number of policy areas in all three countries. In particular, Germans and Poles strongly agree on cooperation to strengthen democracy both within and outside of the EU. The Poles would like to see stronger cooperation on economy and defence, while the Germans see the need to develop common European positions on policies towards Russia and China as very important. The French support joint actions on climate, EU democracy and post-pandemic healthcare cooperation relatively more than in other policy areas.

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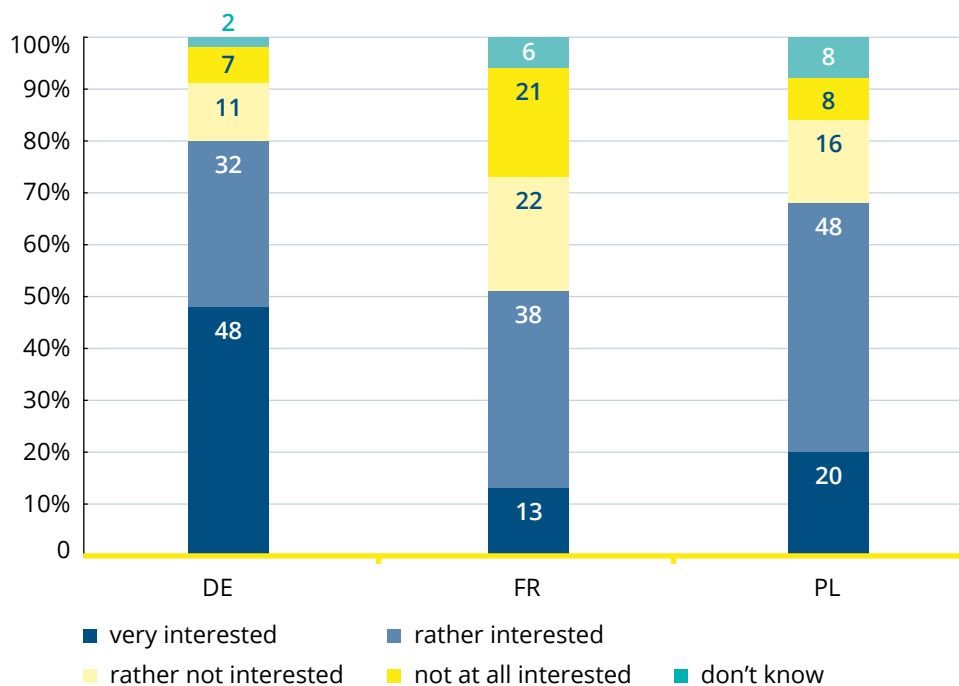
Views and perceptions of European integration in the Weimar Triangle countries



1.1 Interest in the EU

There are significant differences as to the interest of the respective publics in European and international affairs. Such interest is by far the highest in Germany, where more than 80% of respondents declare either strong or moderate interest. On the other hand, the French respondents declare relatively the least interest: only half of the respondents gave a positive answer to this question, whereas one in five says they have no interest whatsoever, compared to 7% in Germany and 8% in Poland, where more than two thirds of respondents have declared at least some interest.

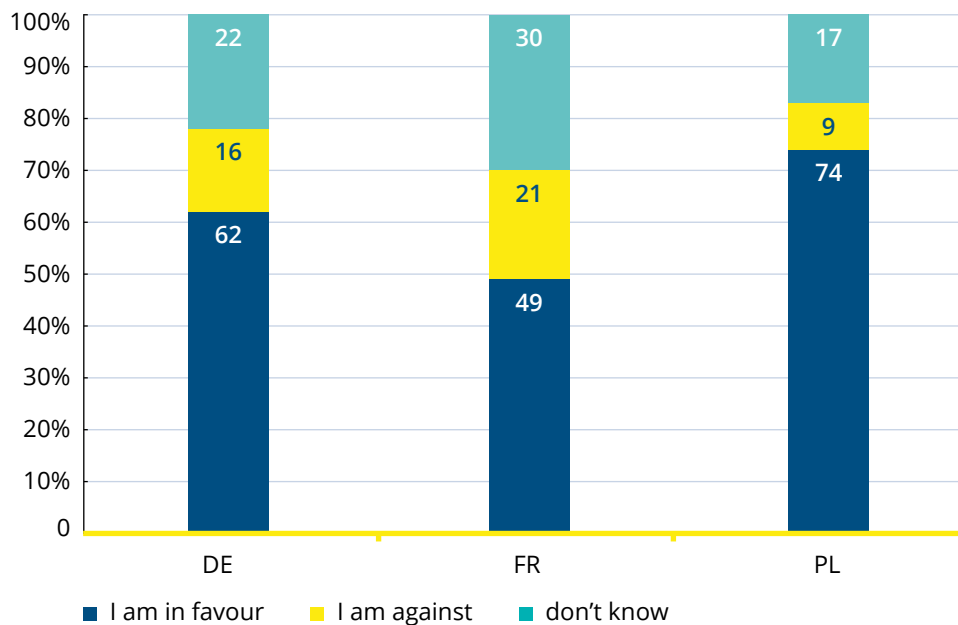
How would you assess your interest in European and international politics?



1.2 Public support for the EU membership

The Polish support for EU membership is the highest among the three publics surveyed, with 74% in favour and less than one in ten Poles opposing membership. Germany follows with almost thirds of respondents expressing pro-EU attitudes and with just 16% Eurosceptics, while the French are overall not very Euro enthusiastic, with just half of the respondents declaring support for membership and one in five opposed to it. Significantly, 30% of those surveyed in France could not decide whether they are in favour or against membership. In all three countries, interest in European and international affairs has a positive correlation with support for membership (the more interested are also more pro-European).

Are you in favour or against your country's membership in the European Union?

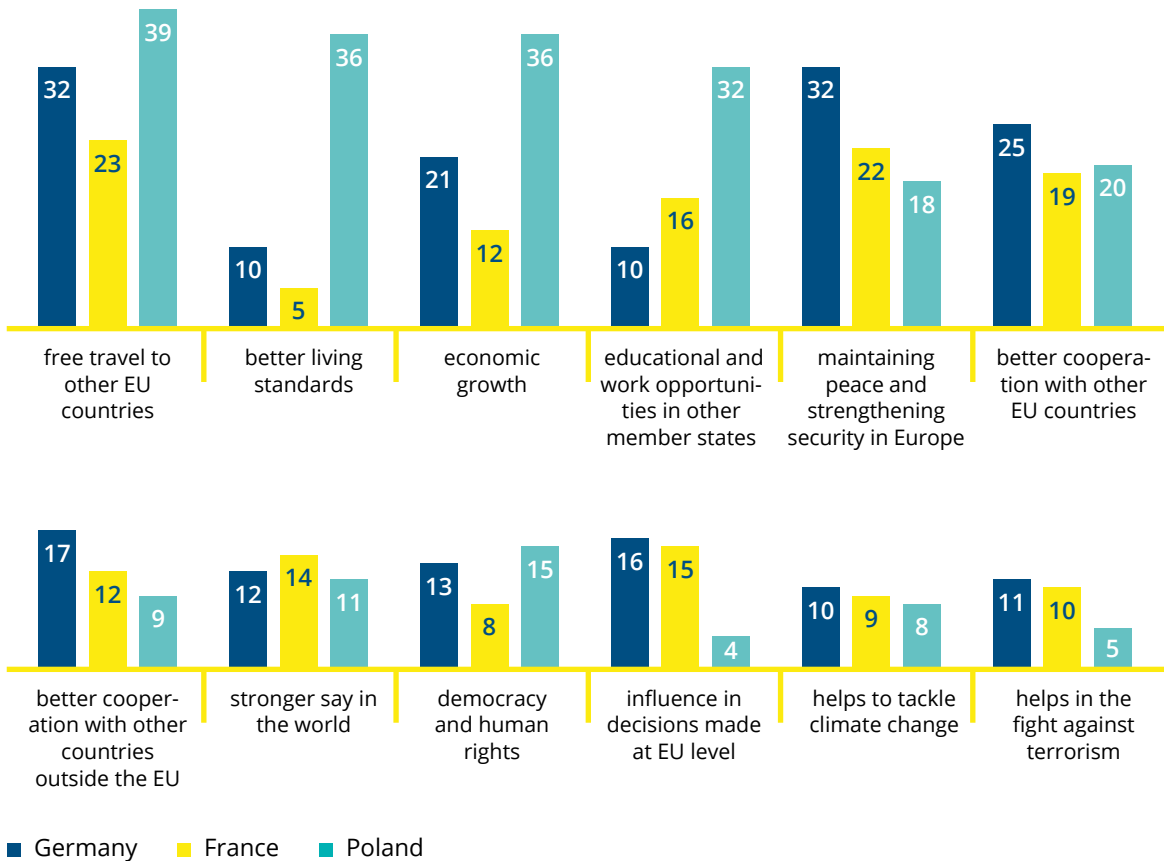


The support for EU membership depends on the respondents' political orientation. Thus, in France, a majority (51%) of the Rassemblement National voters are against membership, with one third in favour. In Germany, the only party whose voters oppose EU membership is Alternative for Germany (61% against and 25% in favour). In Poland, majorities in all key political parties favour membership, but there are differing levels of their support. Thus, 67% of the voters for the ruling Law and Justice Party are in favour of membership (15% against), whereas 97% of the supporters of the main oppositional grouping – the Civic Coalition – are pro-EU.

1.3 Perceived benefits of the EU membership

The German, Polish and French societies differ in their perceptions of benefits deriving from EU membership. Freedom of travel, better quality of life and economic growth are the most popular benefits of membership in Poland, closely followed by international educational and employment opportunities. While free travel is also highly appreciated in France and Germany, Germans consider the EU's contribution to peace and security in Europe an equally important benefit, followed by better cooperation with other EU countries and economic growth. The French respondents struggled to indicate concrete benefits (22% indicated "don't know") while peace and cooperation in Europe were more often indicated than other possible advantages of membership, just like in Germany but with lower percentages. The French also appreciate the fact that EU membership improves French cooperation with other member states, thus strengthening the France's international position. It is worth noting that the three most popular benefits in Poland (freedom of movement, prosperity and growth) are less appreciated in both Germany and France, while Poles feel less politically empowered by membership in contrast to the French and the Germans.

The main reasons for thinking that our country has benefited from being a member of the EU (in %)

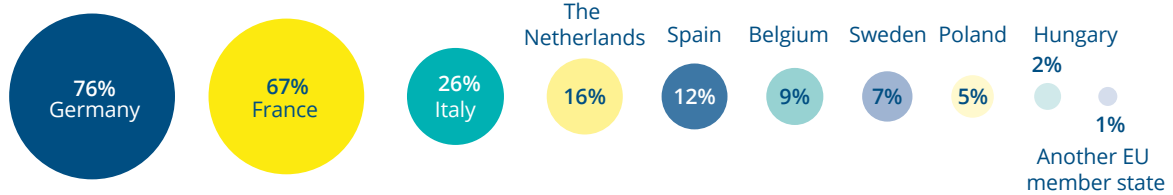


1.4 Views on the most influential countries in Europe

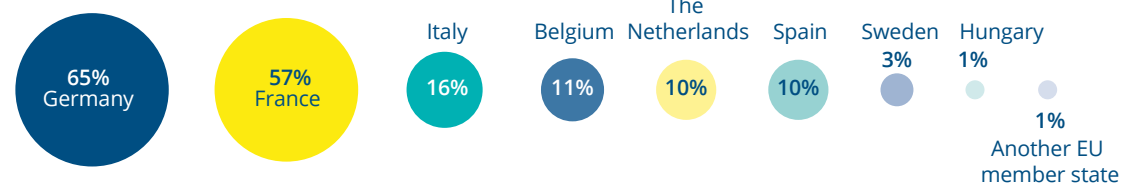
The citizens of all three countries have little doubt as to which countries play a major role in shaping the European agenda, with over two thirds pointing to Germany and strong majorities perceiving France as a key player. In Germany and France, Italy is perceived as the third most important country in the EU, while Poles think it is Belgium (followed by Italy and the Netherlands). In none of the countries Poland is seen as a major player, and only Hungary is perceived as less important than Poland. Poles themselves have little faith in Poland's influence in Brussels, although relatively more Poles (12%) than the French or Germans put Poland among one of the three most influential countries.

Which countries play a major role in shaping European agenda and policies? (name three most influential countries out of the list, rotate answers)

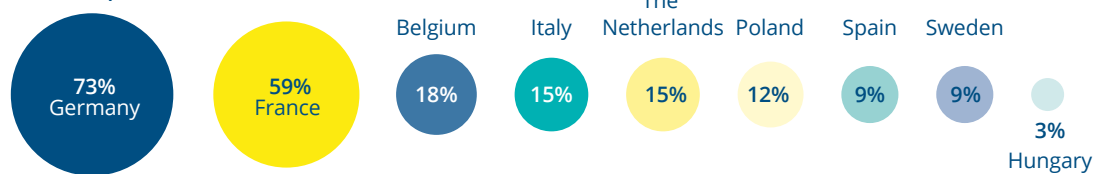
German respondents



French respondents



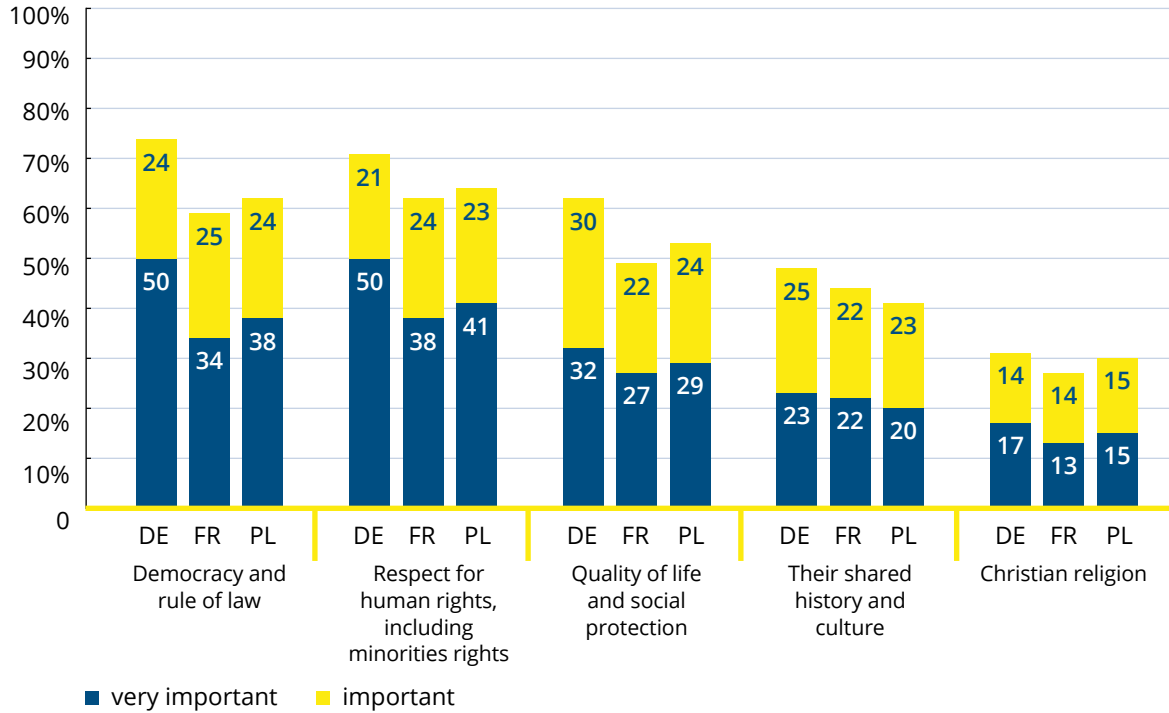
Polish respondents



1.5 Diverse sources of European unity

In today's public debate, there are different views regarding the values that unite the citizens of the European Union. Some of such values, such as democracy and rule of law, are defined in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, while others, such as shared history and culture or Christian religion, are posited by different political groupings and public intellectuals. Others claim that economic prosperity based on high levels of social protection is what holds the citizens of the EU together. As we shall see, all these diverse sources of European unity matter to publics in Poland, France and Germany, albeit to varying degrees.

What unites the citizens of the European Union?



Democracy and rule of law are perceived in all three countries as significantly more important than either culture and history or religion. Two thirds and more of respondents assent to such a proposition. Germans are the strongest supporters of the importance of rule of law, with 74% agreeing with the statement and 50% stating that it is very important. Likewise, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, is perceived as a constituent part of European identity by clear majorities in all three countries, with relatively small groups of respondents declaring the opposite opinion.

The German, Polish and French publics have similar views when it comes to the role of culture and history in creating a common identity among EU citizens. Nearly half of respondents think this is important, whereas less than one in five persons in each country thinks they have little or no importance. Religion as a unifying factor of European societies is viewed more sceptically than culture by citizens of all three countries, with less than one in three respondents giving a positive answer, while roughly similar groups of respondents remain doubtful.

Another important factor which all three societies see as unifying EU citizens is prosperity and high levels of social protection. Germans agree with this proposition more strongly than the French, who are slightly less convinced than both Germans and Poles. Once again, very few people in the three countries reject the idea.

In Poland, the views on the sources of European unity are significantly correlated with political allegiances of the respondents. Thus, in Poland, the supporters of the populist and nationalistic right (PiS, Confederation) are more likely to stress the importance of Christianity, whereas those who vote for democratic opposition parties, especially

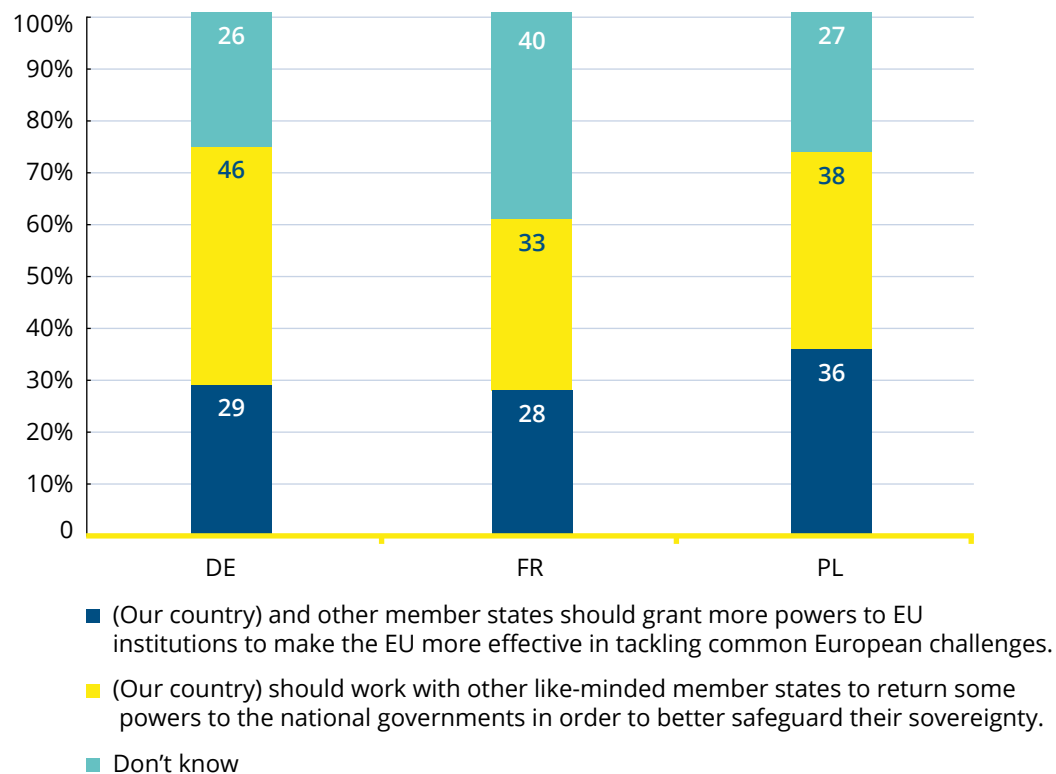
the Civic Platform and the Left, are rather sceptical in this respect. On the other hand, the same supporters of oppositional parties in Poland more often assert that democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights as well as EU institutions are what keep the Europeans together. In Germany and France, party affiliations do not correlate as strongly with the views of European unity as they do in Poland.

To sum up, while all constituent elements of EU identity are appreciated by the citizens of all three countries, our societies attach relatively more importance to democracy, rule of law, civic rights and prosperity than to factors like shared history and culture or religion.

1.6 Views on the future direction of the EU

While in all three countries, support for EU membership clearly exceeds the opposition, the three publics seem to be divided as regards the desired evolution of this organisation. While significant sections of each society support the expansion of the competencies of the UE institutions to allow them to tackle common challenges, pluralities (not majorities) in all three countries would like to see a devolution of some powers back to nation states in order to better safeguard their sovereignty. In Poland, the two opposing preferences are supported by roughly similar groups of respondents, whereas both in France and in Germany, the “sovereignty” camp is visibly larger than those who favour a closer union. Forty percent of the French have declined to answer this question, which corresponds to the relatively low interest in EU affairs in the country.

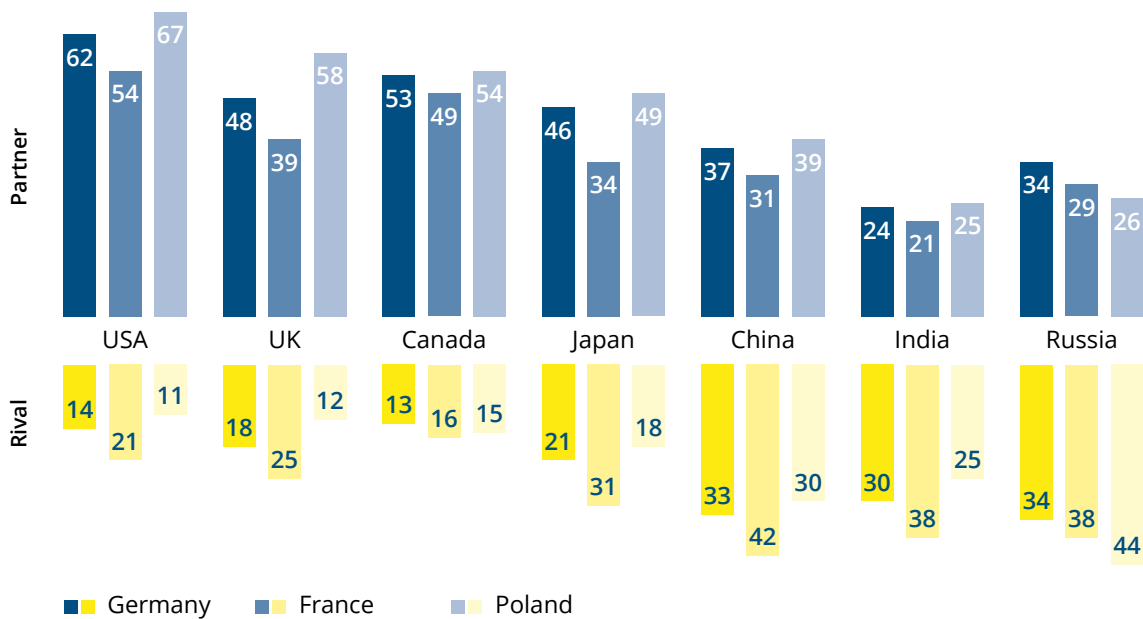
Which of the following statements best reflects your views on the future of the EU?



1.7 The EU and global challenges – partners and strategic rivals

The respondents in the three countries were asked about their perception of a number of countries outside of the EU, namely whether a given country should be seen as an important partner or a strategic rival of the EU in dealing with global challenges and threats.

Which country should be an important partner for the EU in dealing with global challenges/threats and which should be considered as a strategic rival? (in %)



The Poles, Germans and the French most often see the three prosperous English-speaking democracies – the USA, the UK and Canada – as important partners rather than strategic rivals.

The biggest majorities perceive the United States as an important partner of the EU, with Poles being the most affirmative (67%), closely followed by Germans (62%). At the same time, relatively few respondents see the US as a rival. The latter view is shared by 21% of the French, 14% of Germans and 11% of Poles.

Poland has the most favourable view of the UK partnership with the EU (58%), with a much smaller percentage of Poles (12%) perceiving the UK as a strategic rival, while the Germans and French are somewhat less convinced of UK partnership potential (48% and 39%, respectively). Nonetheless, even in France, a minority (25%) view post-Brexit Britain as an EU strategic rival. Also, the majority of Poles and Germans as well as nearly half of all French see Canada as EU's partner, while relatively small minorities see it as a rival.

Outside of the so-called western world, Japan is considered an important partner for the EU by relatively high percentages of respondents. Nevertheless, in none of the three countries does a majority consider Japan an important partner, although even fewer see it as a strategic rival.

The perceptions of China are quite ambiguous. Comparable percentages of respondents consider China as an EU partner and as a strategic rival, with the exception of France where nearly half of all polled (42%) considered China a rival of the EU, outnumbering those considering it a partner (31%).

Strikingly, the perceptions of India, often dubbed “the world’s greatest democracy” are less positive than in case of China, especially as regards the percentages of respondents who consider India as an important partner of the EU. Similar groups of respondents in each country rate it as an important partner and as a strategic rival. The largest groups (pluralities) in all countries are those who could not exactly place India in either camp, choosing a neutral answer.

The citizens in all three countries are very divided in their perceptions of Russia’s position vis-à-vis the EU. One third of German respondents and even fewer in France and Poland see Russia as an important partner, while a plurality (albeit not a majority) of the French and Poles see Russia as a strategic rival. The latter view is upheld by 34% of Germans, while exactly the same percentage of Germans would like to see Russia as an important partner of the EU.



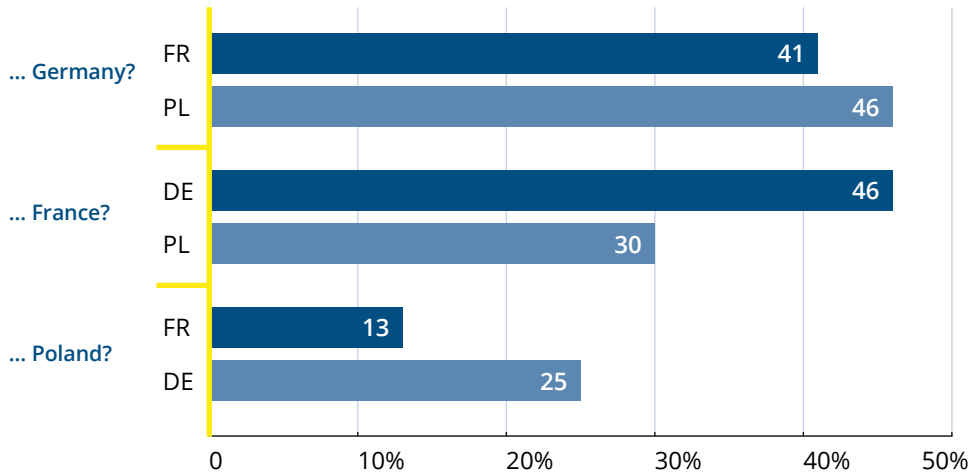
Mutual perceptions and people to people contacts

2.1 The level of information about other Weimar Triangle Countries

While the Weimar Triangle is mainly about the relations and joint initiatives of the three governments, the societal dimension of the relations between our countries is an important aspect of the relations. Public support for deepening cooperation largely depends on mutual knowledge, perceptions and contacts between the citizens of all three countries.

Our research has shown that there is visible asymmetry between Germany and France on one hand, and Poland on the other hand as concerns mutual interest in other countries' state of affairs. The Germans and the French feel relatively well informed about each other's domestic politics and society. In contrast, the interest in Polish affairs in Germany and, especially, in France is conspicuously lower. While 41% of the French declare that they feel well informed about Germany, just 13% feel informed about Poland. The German knowledge of Polish affairs is almost double that in France (25%), although it is considerably lower than their declared knowledge of the French domestic situation. Poles are more than twice as interested in French affairs as the French in Polish, and a similar asymmetry exists between Poland and Germany. This shows that there is much room for improvement as regards the awareness of and interest in Polish affairs in the other two Weimar countries.

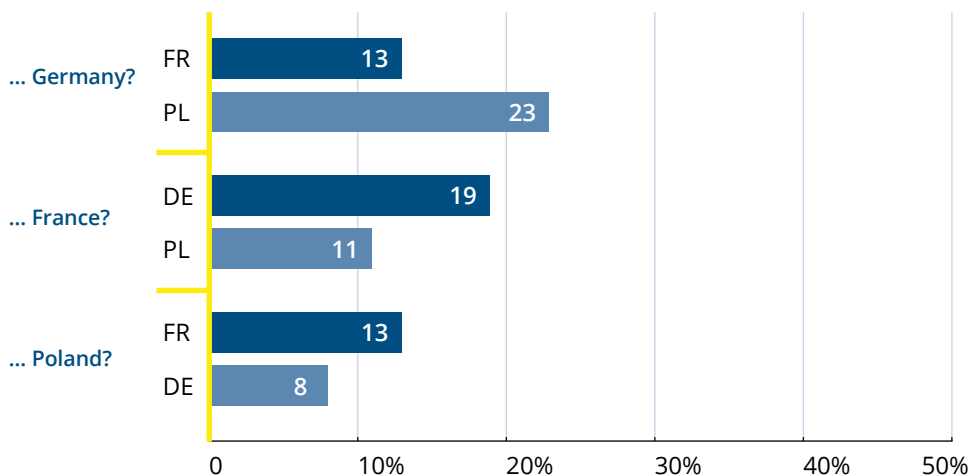
How well do you feel informed about the political and societal situation in ...



2.2 The possibility of living in another Weimar Triangle Country

EU membership gives all European citizens the right to settle in any other EU country. As it turns out, minorities in each of the Weimar countries would ever consider living in one of the other two countries. A significant number of Poles (23%) declare that they would consider living in Germany, whereas only 13% of the French respondents concur. Nineteen percent of Germans would like to live in France, while less than one in ten would consider moving to Poland. The French are less keen to move to any of the two other countries, and the same percentage (just 13%) would consider moving to Germany as would consider moving to Poland.

Could you ever consider living in ...

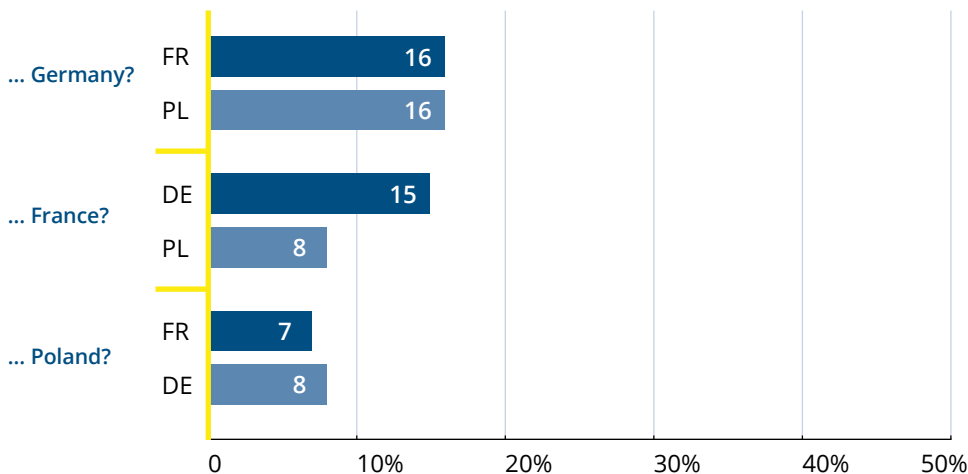


2.3 Participation in student exchange programs

Student exchange programs are believed to be one of the ways of creating European identity for the next generation of political, intellectual and business elites. Of the three countries, Germany seems to be the most popular destination as 16% of both Poles and the French say they or their close relatives have participated in such an exchange. France is popular with Germans but less so with Poles, while the smallest but still notable groups of French and Germans have studied in Poland.

However, if we only consider the youngest respondents (18–24 years old), these numbers are significantly higher. Thus 30% of young Poles say that they (or their relatives) participated in exchange programs with Germany and 14% with France. Even more young Germans (32%) say they studied in France and as many as 14% of the young French – in Poland.

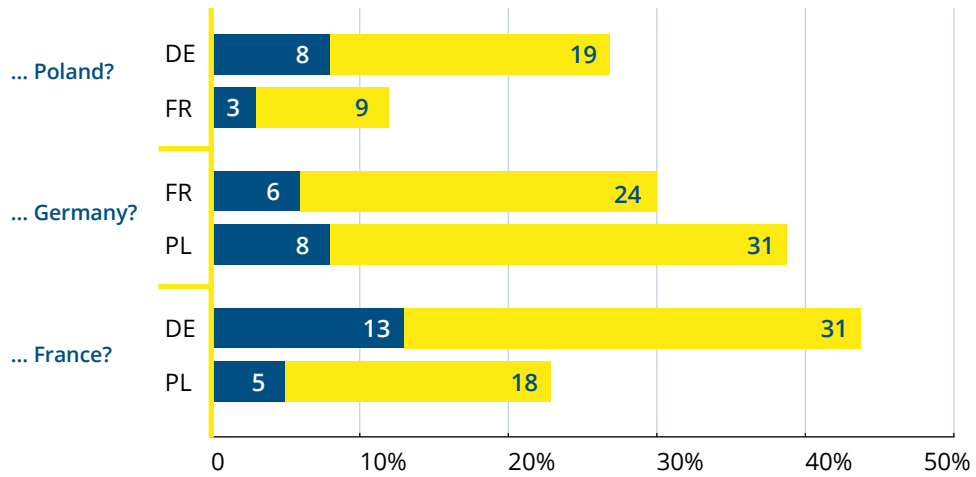
Have you or your close relatives ever participated in a youth or student exchange programme in ...



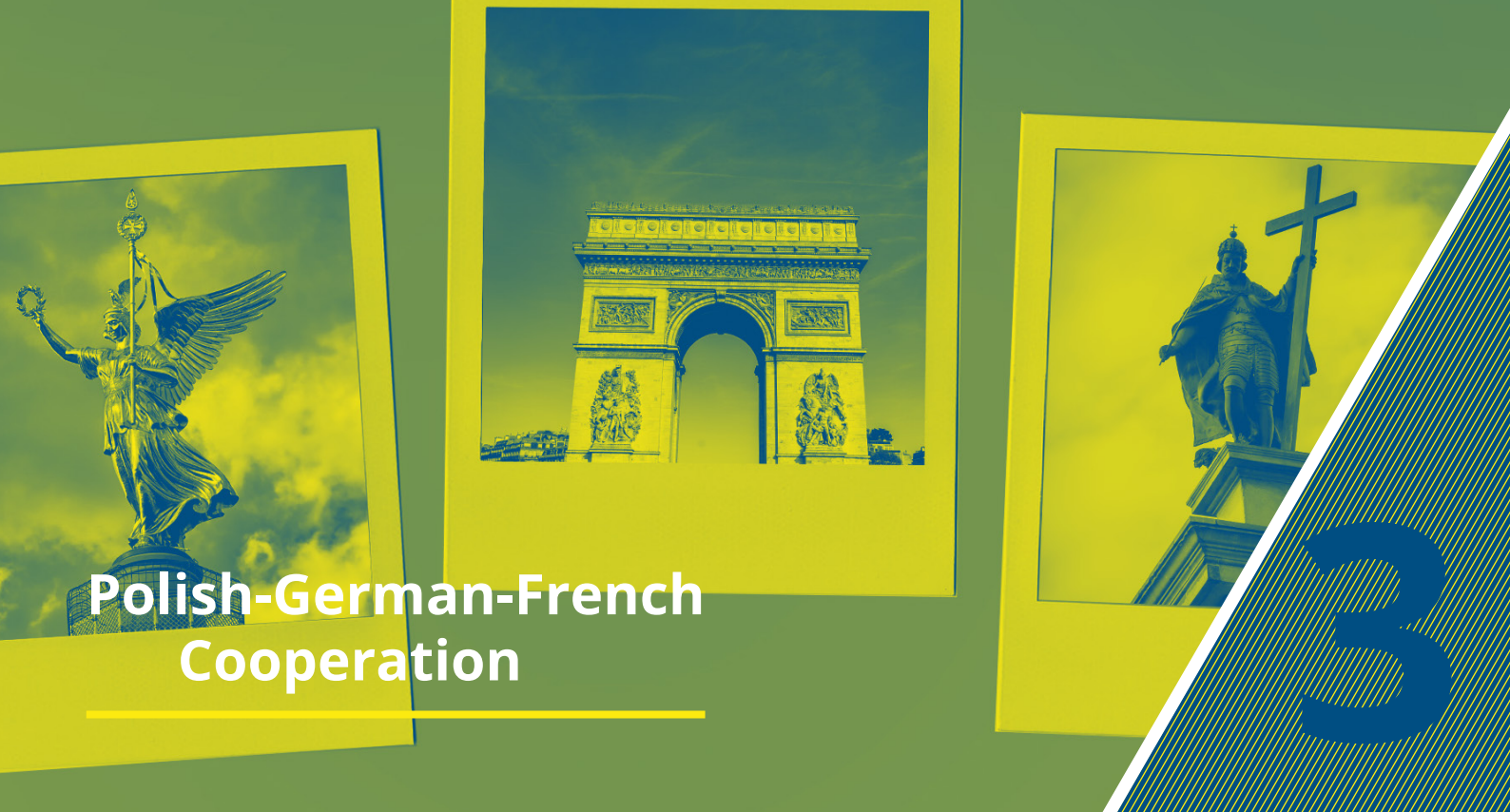
2.4 Levels of regional and municipal cooperation

Regional and municipal cooperation constitutes an important dimension of European integration and relations between Germany, France and Poland. Our study shows that a considerable part of the public opinion in the three countries is at least aware of partnerships between their regions or towns with partners in one of the other two countries. It indicates that the levels of such cooperation (as they are perceived by public opinion) are higher between Poland and Germany and between Germany and France than between Poland and France. It should also be noticed that a relative minority in each country is aware of concrete outcomes of such cooperation. Thus, 13% of Germans are aware of such outcomes as regards Franco-German local government partnerships, whereas in other cases, the corresponding numbers are below ten percent of respondents in each country.

Is the town or the region where you live in a partnership with a town or region in ...



- Yes, and I am aware of concrete outcomes of such a partnership.
- Yes, but I have not experienced any specific activities related to this partnership.



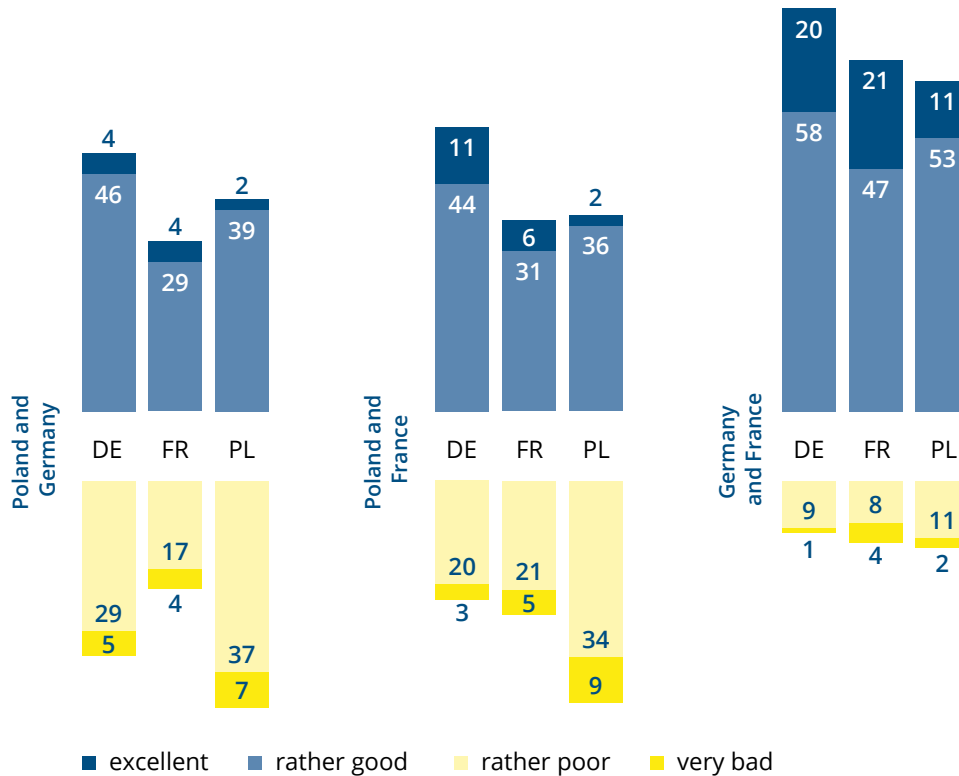
Polish-German-French Cooperation

3.1 The assessment of the state of bilateral relations between the Weimar Triangle countries

The public assessment of the current state of bilateral relations between Poland and Germany, Poland and France as well as between Germany and France remains an important consideration for policy makers and experts who either shape or analyse these relations. As we have found out, the views of the three publics on the current state of Polish-German and Polish-French relations are quite ambiguous, with significant groups of respondents having contradicting opinions on the matter.

In Germany, positive opinions on the state of relations with Poland dominate, with half of all respondents believing relations to be rather good (46%) or even excellent (4%). In contrast, while the largest group of the French respondents were unable to make an assessment of Polish-German relations, one third think they are rather good or excellent, while one in five respondents says they are rather bad or very bad (17% and 4%, respectively). Poles seem to be relatively the most critical of their country's relations with Germany: 44% of them think the relations are bad or very bad (37% and 7%, respectively) while 41% believe that they are good or very good (39% and 2%, respectively).

The state of relations between (in %):



Polish assessment of the state of Polish-French relations is very similar to the opinions on the relations between Poland and Germany, as positive and negative opinions are expressed by comparable groups of respondents. In France, there are fewer positive and negative opinions than in Poland because nearly half of respondents have not been able or willing to answer the question. Still, more than one in five French respondents, a significant minority, think that the state of relations is bad. Germans are less critical of the state of the Franco-Polish relations than the Poles or the French, with a majority (55%) of positive opinions.

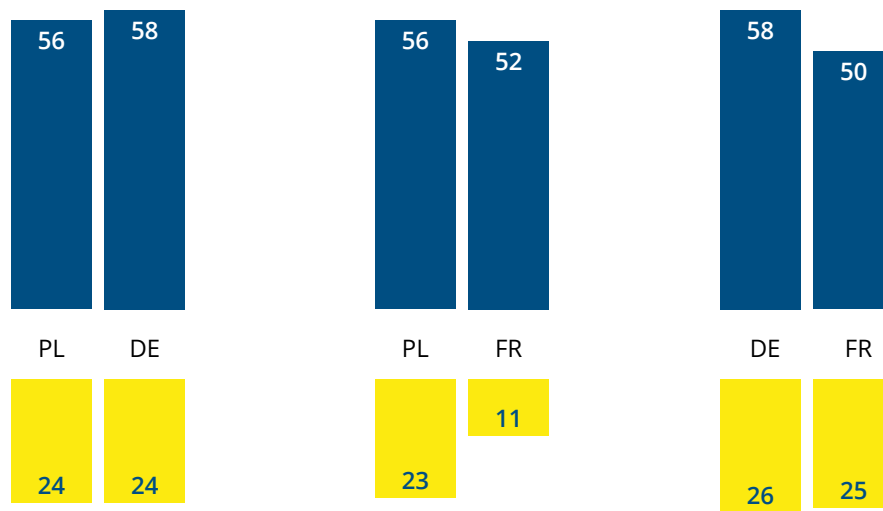
The French, German and Polish assessments of Franco-German relations are largely positive and, thus, very different than the opinions on the state of Polish-German and Polish-French bilateral relations. Nearly 80% of Germans, 68% of the French and 64% of Poles think these relations are rather good or even excellent, while small minorities (one in ten respondents) remain critical. The asymmetry between French and German relations with Poland on one hand, and the French-German relations is, thus, rather obvious to the publics in all three countries.

3.2 The role of shared history in bilateral relations

Poland, Germany and France share a long, often difficult history which will always remain significant for the bilateral relations between these countries and their cooperation within the Weimar Triangle format. Nevertheless, both public opinion and the

governments of the three countries may have differing views as to how important a role this common history should play in their relations. Our survey indicates that although history remains an important point of reference, priority should be given to tackling present and future challenges.

Which of the following statements best expresses your opinion? (in %)



- In our relations, we should focus on tackling the present and future challenges rather than on past memories.
- Our shared history, good or bad, should be the cornerstone of the relations.

As we see, more than twice as many respondents in Poland and Germany believe that existing and forthcoming challenges are more important than past memories. Nonetheless, it should be noticed that significant minorities (around one fourth of all respondents) deem history a cornerstone of mutual relations.

Shared history in Polish-French relations is less appreciated by the French than by the Polish public, and clear majorities of Poles and the French believe that current and future challenges are the priority for both countries.

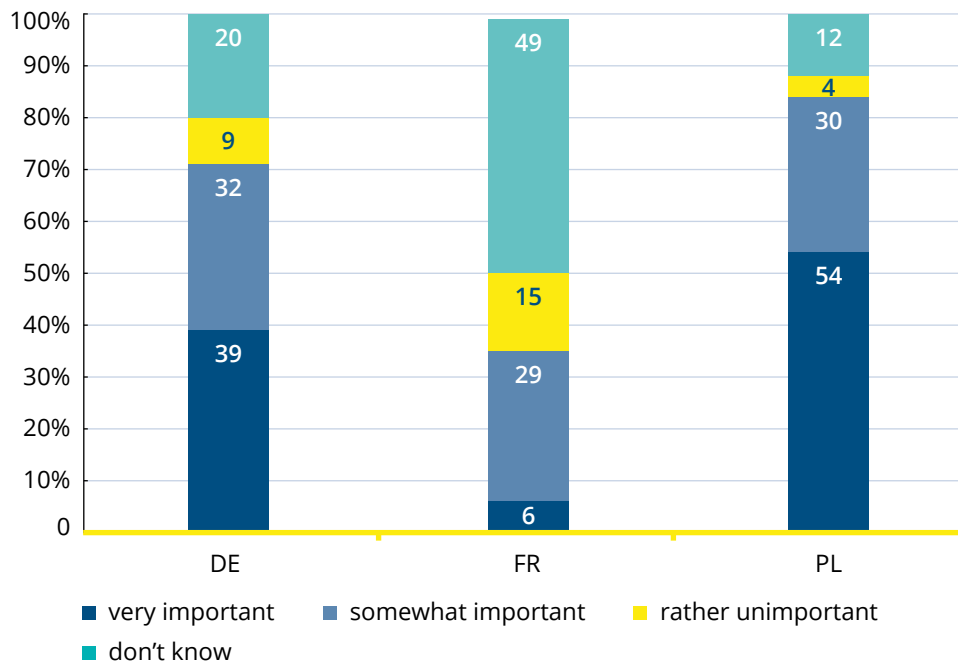
Interestingly, the French and Germans seem to have a very similar assessment of the relative importance of history in their mutual relations as Poles and Germans in theirs. Majorities in France and Germany think that tackling present and future challenges should come first yet shared history continues to matter to significant parts of both societies.

We can thus conclude that while the three societies agree that their governments should be future oriented when shaping their mutual relations, for many Poles, Germans and the French, history is an indispensable part of their relations and must not be neglected.

3.3 The importance of bilateral relations for European integration

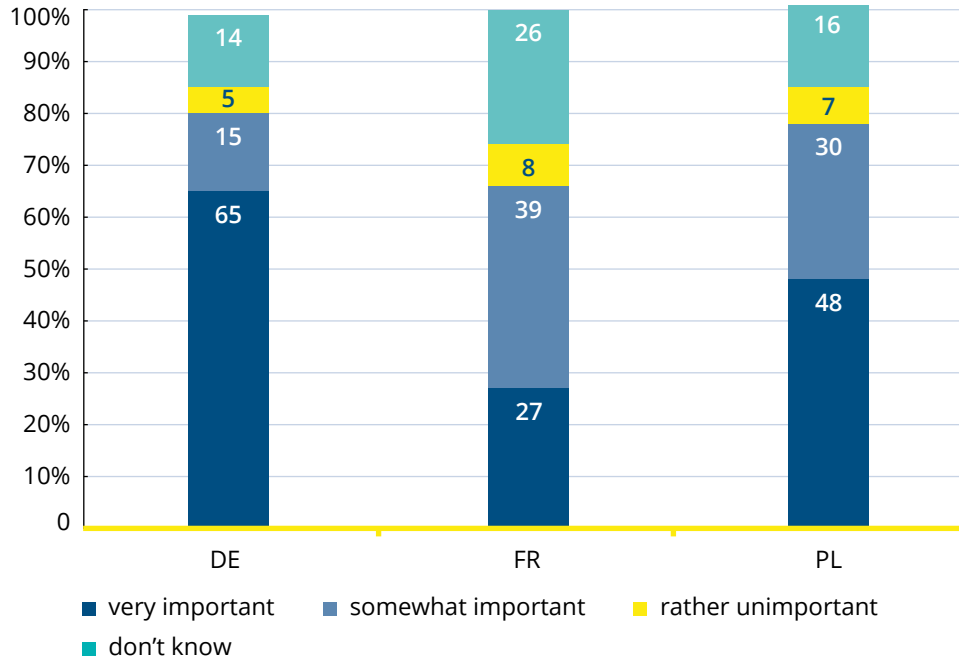
While the state of relations between Poland and Germany is viewed with considerable criticism by significant numbers of Polish, German and French respondents, the public opinion in all three countries, but especially in Germany and in Poland, reflects appreciation of the importance of these bilateral relations for European integration. Eighty-four percent of Poles and 71% of all Germans think these relations are very or somewhat important, and while almost half of French respondents were not able to answer this question, just 15% gave a negative response and more than twice as many (35%) think Polish-German relations matter to Europe.

How important are German-Polish relations for European integration?



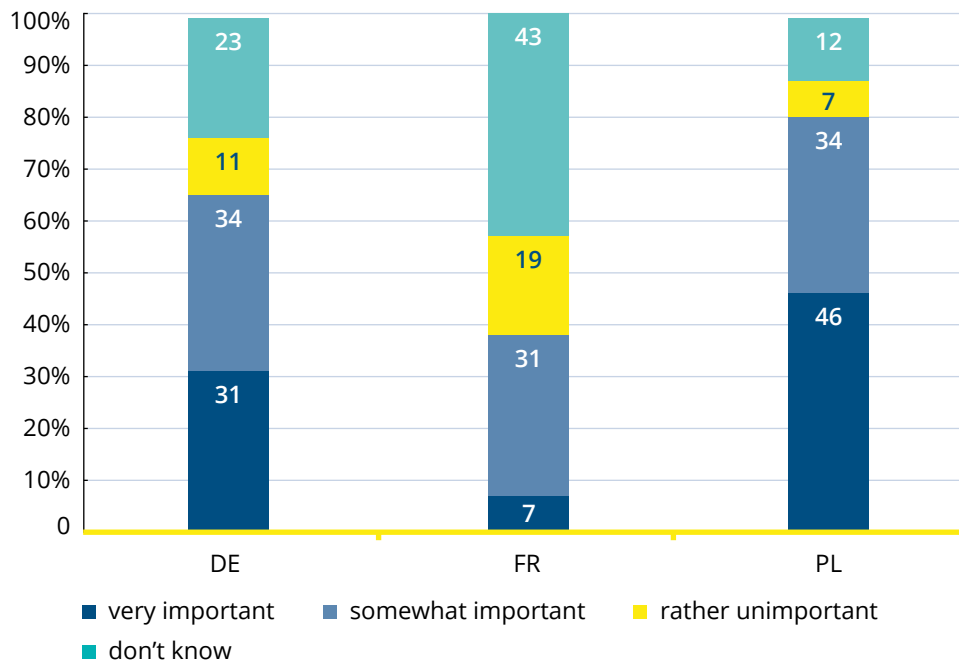
Not surprisingly, Franco-German relations are seen as even more important for European integration than Polish-German relations. This is especially true in Germany, where 80% of respondents agree that these relations are important, including 65% who think they are very important. The French are somewhat less enthusiastic, but nonetheless a clear majority say that Franco-German relations matter for European integration and just 8% disagree. Poles largely concur with Germans as nearly half of them think Franco-German relations are very important and another 30% consider them somewhat important.

How important are Franco-German relations for European integration?



Positive attitudes also prevail in the assessment of the importance of Franco-Polish relations for European integration, albeit to a lesser degree than in the case of Franco-German relations. Clear majorities of Poles and Germans consider these relations important as well as a plurality of the French. The latter remain somewhat sceptical, yet only a minority (19%) think that these relations are of no importance for Europe.

How important are Franco-Polish relations for European integration?

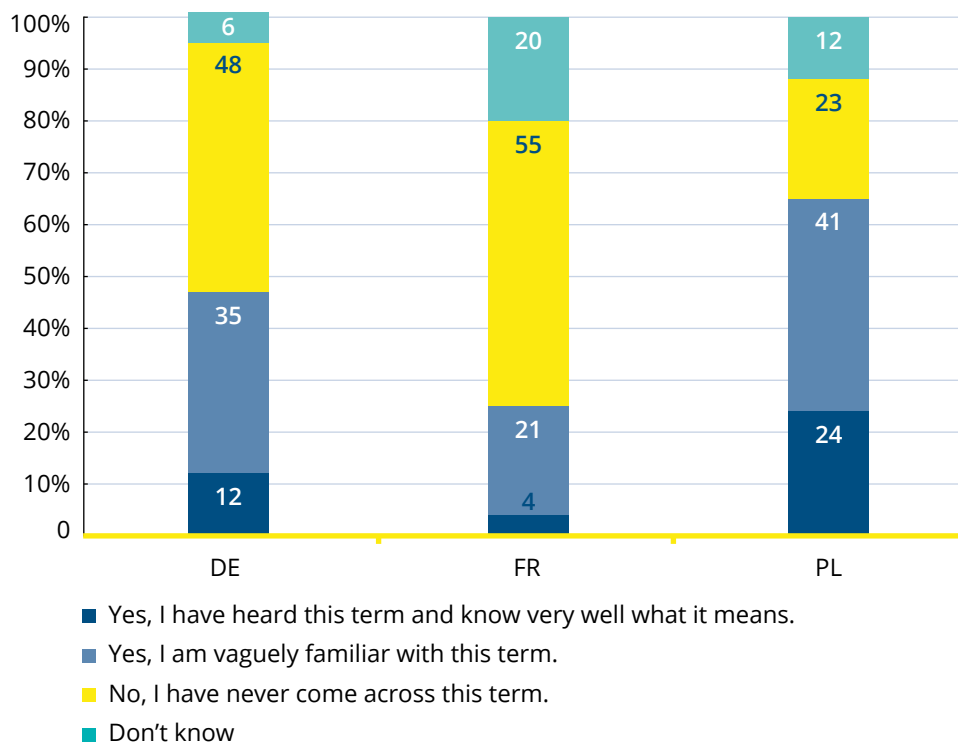


3.4 Recognition of the Weimar Triangle by the public

While most Poles, Germans and most of the French seem to appreciate the importance of their countries' bilateral relations for European integration, the question remains as to how aware the three societies are of the concept of the Weimar Triangle and its meaning. In view of the fact that this concept is mainly used by politicians and experts, it is remarkable that a clear majority of Poles and a significant number of Germans claim to be at least familiar with this term. Only in France more than half of the respondents say they never heard of the term, although one in four is either familiar with it or knows its meaning.

Interest in international and European politics is an important determinant as regards the awareness of the Weimar Triangle in the three countries. Among those interested in politics, as many as 45% of Poles, 17% of the Germans and 14% of the French not only have heard of the format but know what the term means.

Are you familiar with the term the "Weimar Triangle"?

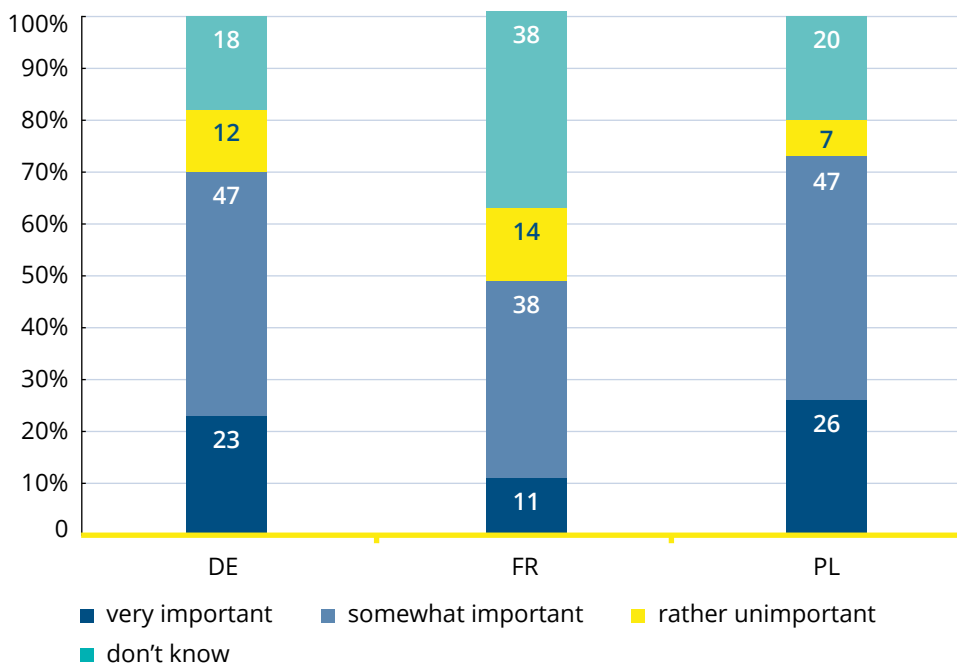


3.5 The perceived importance of the Weimar Triangle

The Weimar cooperation is viewed as very or rather important by strong majorities in Germany and Poland and by nearly half of the French respondents. Conversely, just small minorities think that such cooperation is of no importance for the European project. Importantly, in all three countries, those respondents who have strong interest in international and European politics are far more convinced than others

about the importance of the Weimar Triangle cooperation. Thus, among the respondents who are highly interested in politics, as many as 27% of the French, 32% of Germans and 45% of Poles think that Weimar Triangle cooperation is *very* important. The respective percentages of those who think it is important are 79% for Poland, 78% for Germany and 69% for France.

How do you assess the role of The Weimar Triangle (Poland-Germany-France) for the further integration of Europe and shaping the EU’s political agenda?



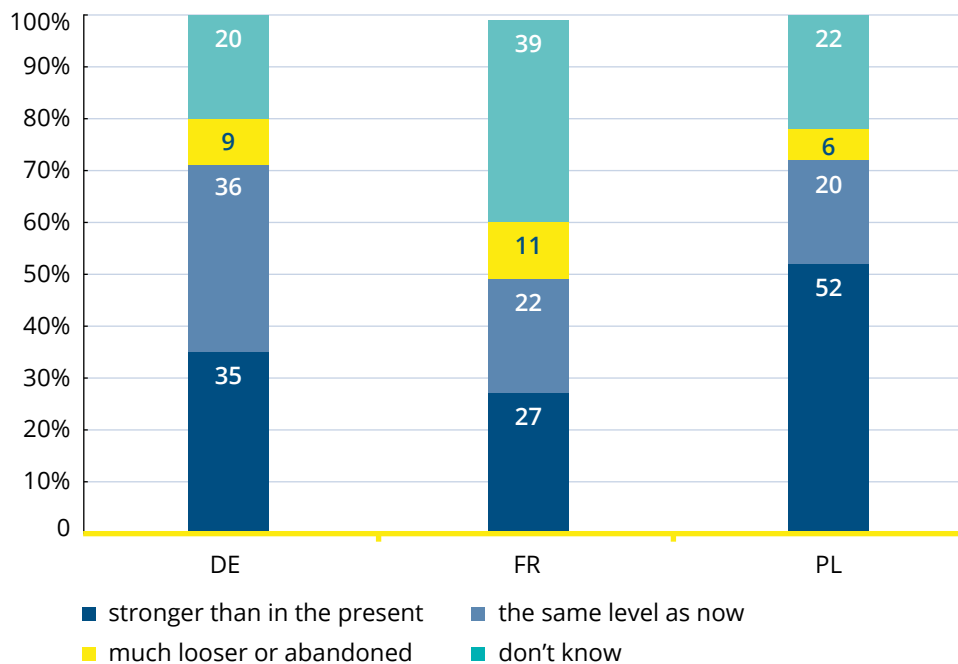
The perceived importance of the Weimar Triangle cooperation also depends on the political sympathies of the respondents. Thus, the supporters of Poland’s ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party are less likely to think that the cooperation is very important than the supporters of the key oppositional grouping the Civic Platform. At the same time, a vast majority of PiS supporters think that the cooperation is either *very* or *rather* important, although the combined percentages for oppositional parties are even higher. In short, the supporters of the main political parties in Poland have positive attitudes towards the Weimar Triangle cooperation but the opposition voters give this cooperation relatively higher priority.

In Germany, support for the Weimar cooperation is high across the political spectrum, with the one notable exception of AfD voters, who are significantly less enthusiastic than other constituencies, one third of whom think such cooperation is not important. In France, the supporters of *La République en Marche* are most enthusiastic, while the voters of the National Assembly and the Communist party are most sceptical.

3.6 The future of the Weimar Triangle Cooperation

While many political analysts and some politicians admit that the current levels of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle leave much room for improvement, they have differing views on how this cooperation should develop in the future. Firstly, we see that very few of the Poles, Germans or the French would like to see the Weimar Triangle cooperation diminished or even abandoned. In Germany, similar groups of respondents think that the cooperation should be strengthened or kept at the present level. Poles are the most enthusiastic and a majority would like to see more cooperation than at the present moment. Lastly, the French are less supportive of stronger Franco-Polish-German cooperation, but this option is still more popular than other choices. All in all, we can say that maintaining or strengthening cooperation is clearly preferred by the three societies as opposed to abandoning it all together.

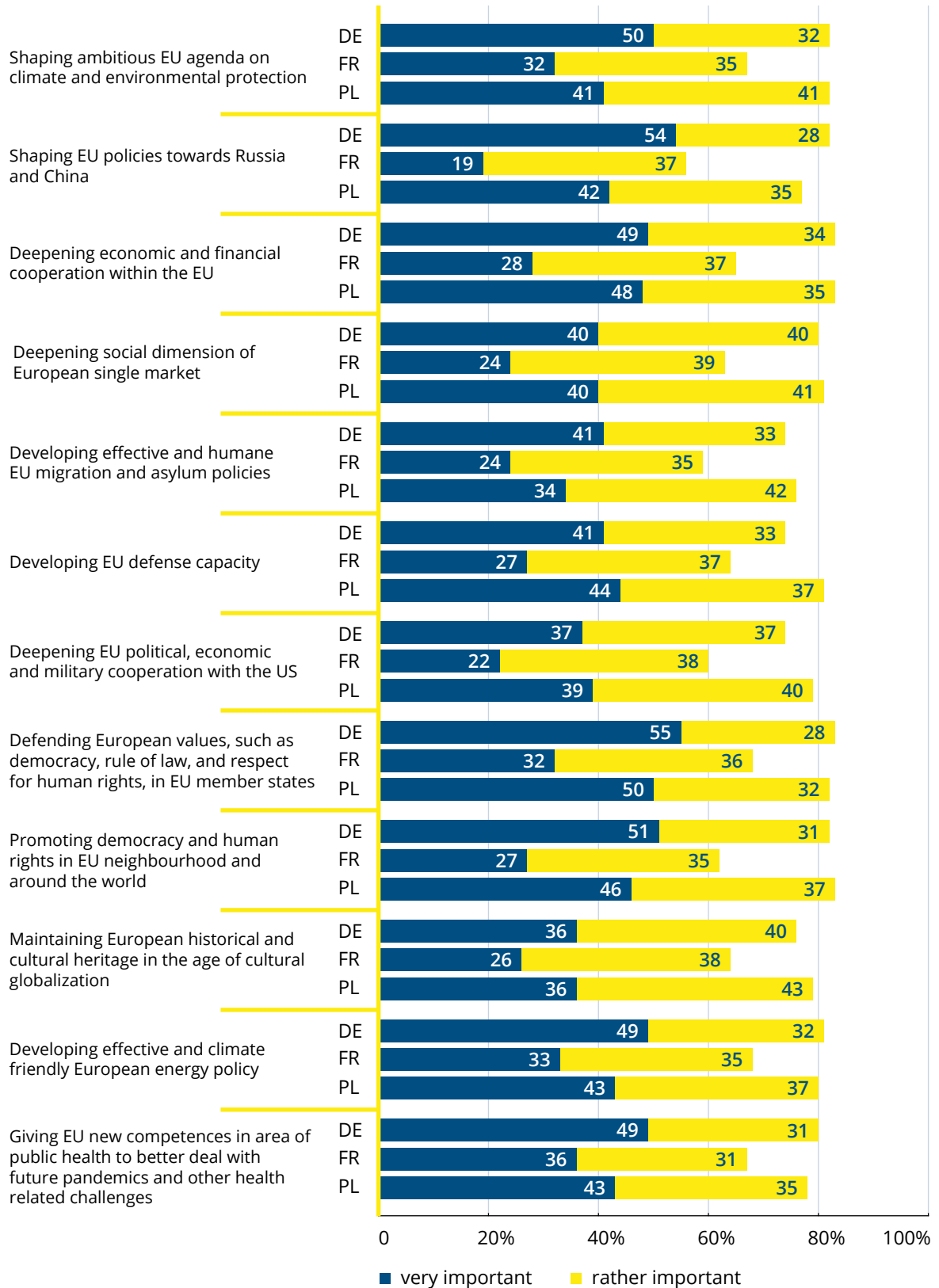
Do you think that in the future the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle (Poland-Germany-France) should be strengthened, loosened or should stay at the same level?



3.7 The Priority areas for the Weimar Triangle Cooperation in Europe

There is significant support in all three countries for Weimar Triangle cooperation across a broad list of policy areas. In particular, Germans and Poles strongly agree on cooperation to strengthen democracy both within and outside of the EU. The Poles would like to see stronger cooperation on economy and defence, while the Germans see the need to develop common European positions on policies towards Russia and China as very important. The French support joint actions on climate, EU democracy and post-pandemic healthcare cooperation relatively more strongly than other policy areas.

What should be priority areas for the future cooperation between Germany, Poland and France within the EU?



Note on methodology

The survey was conducted between the 5th and 17th of August 2021 by Kantar Public on online panels in Poland, France and Germany. Nationwide samples of 1,000 respondents each are representative of the general population aged 18 to 75 by gender, age, education and place of residence. A key advantage of an online survey is that it gives respondents a better opportunity than alternative methods to reflect as they can see the questions and choose their answers on the computer screen. This is particularly important when the survey concerns complex issues where most people do not have a clear opinion. The CAWI method also provides respondents with a relatively greater sense of anonymity in comparison to the face-to-face method and thus reduces the effect of respondents answering according to the interviewer's presumed expectations. However, when analysing the results, it should also be considered that in the CAWI method, respondents choose the "it's hard to say/don't know" response relatively more often than in phone or face-to-face surveys, as these answers are visible on the computer screen, while in interviews conducted by an interviewer they are not read, but only marked at the respondent's request.

Note on the author

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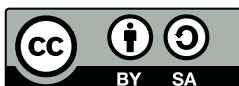
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