

## Comparison of the French and the German Agendas of Global Health

### Introduction

Global Health has gained more political importance and visibility in a number of OECD countries as well as at the level of the European Union through the development of Global Health Strategies. The knowledge of other nations' priorities and strategies in Global Health is a prerequisite for the development of concerted activities. That is why the Centre Virchow-Villermé for Public Health Paris-Berlin invited experts from ministries from France and Germany, from the European Commission, from academia as well as NGOs and student representatives to discuss with around 60 participants a set of key questions in a round-table setting:

- "Which Global Health Strategies does each country have?"
- "What are the political priorities of Global Health in each country?"
- "How is Global Health anchored in the ministries?"
- "What is each country's position regarding the WHO and the future of Global Health governance?"
- "In which areas of Global Health do Germany and France work together?"
- "What are the goals of the EUs global health council conclusions?"
- "How can they support the Global Health Strategy of the European Union?"

The workshop was opened by **Florence Rivière-Bourhis**, Head Division of Science and Technology of the French Embassy in Berlin and **Joachim Bleicker**, Representative on fundamental issues of EU external relations and the relations with the Member States of the European Union of the Foreign Ministry. Both speakers highlighted the importance of a close French-German cooperation and welcomed the initiative of the Centre Virchow-Villermé for Public Health Paris-Berlin to establish a comprehensive comparison of the French and the German strategies in Global Health.

**Ilona Kickbusch**, Director of the Graduate Institute Geneva, started the presentations with a brief introduction on national agendas of global health, followed by a presentation of the German national agenda of global health by **Dagmar Reitenbach** from the German Ministry of Health. The French position was reviewed by **Jeanine Pommier** from the French school of Public Health (EHESP), followed by **Canice Nolan** from the European commission in Brussels, who explained EU's work in the field of global health.

### National agendas of global health in global health diplomacy

**Ilona Kickbusch** (Director, The Graduate Institute Geneva, Switzerland) made the point that 10 years ago it would not have been possible to see German and French diplomats opening a meeting on global health. Today this meeting in global health and the World Health Summit take place in the German Foreign Office.

Over the past decade, the field of global health has changed profoundly. In this context, three interrelated political mechanisms of global health can be distinguished: firstly, **global health governance** which comprises the work of global health institutions such as the WHO and new institutions such as the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM); secondly, **global governance for health**, which refers to global governance in fields other than traditional health policy, but with high relevance to health outcomes, like trade and climate change; and, thirdly, national or



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**regional governance for global health**, which refers to political processes on the national level and regional with regard to global health. The third point has attracted more attention recently, as a number of key countries have adopted National Global Health Strategies, including France, Germany and the EU.

### The German national agenda of global health

Dagmar Reitenbach (*Head of department Multilateral Cooperation in the Field of Health, Federal Ministry of Health, Germany*) underlined that Global Health is of increasing importance to the German government, as highlighted, among others, by the adoption of the **German National Concept Paper on Global Health** by the German government cabinet in summer 2013. Such strategy papers are only adopted in areas of high strategic relevance.

The paper, entitled “Shaping Global Health – Taking Joint Action – Embracing Responsibility”, is meant to sharpen Germany’s profile in global health, to improve cooperation, and to increase the effectiveness of the Germany’s contributions to global health. It frames global health as an interlinked, cross-cutting topic, which requires close cooperation across ministries, and across national borders.

Work on the concept paper was initiated 2009, shortly after Germany had become a member of the WHO Executive Board. In order to learn from other countries, meetings with representatives from Switzerland, among others, were arranged, and proved very helpful. Civil society participation was equally crucial in informing the concept paper’s conceptual content.

**German global health policy** is guided by three main principles: firstly, the protection and improvement of the health of Germany’s population through global action; secondly, the embracement of global responsibility by providing German experience, expertise and funds; and thirdly, the strengthening of international institutions for global health. On a more concrete level, the German government has identified five key priorities:

1. effective protection against cross-border health threats
2. strengthening of health systems throughout the world and the facilitation of development
3. improvement of intersectoral cooperation and the consideration of interactions with other policy areas
4. promotion of health research and the health care industry as an important contribution to global health
5. strengthening of the institutional architecture of global health, including the reform and strengthening of the WHO.

These five priorities were chosen because these are areas in which Germany has a lot of expertise, and is thus able to contribute in a relevant way. This is exemplified by the first German Strategy on Fighting Microbial Resistance, which has allowed Germany to acquire substantial policy experience in this field, which is now fed into the development of the WHO Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, which will hopefully be adopted at the World Health Assembly in 2015.

Throughout its involvement in global health, Germany is cooperating closely with France. From 2009 to 2011, France and Germany were both members of the WHO Executive Board, and currently both countries are serving in the Steering Committee of the WHO-EURO Region. France and Germany are united in pursuing a number of common priorities, which include the strengthening of the International Health Regulations (IHR), the fight against microbial resistance, immunization, and the commitment to universal health coverage as part of the post-2015 development agenda.

### The French national agenda of global health

Jeanine Pommier (*Deputy Director, Department of Human and Social Sciences and Health Behaviour, EHESP School of Public Health, France*) described France’s approach to global health as based on a firm commitment to finding answers to the most pressing challenges in this policy field. These challenges include the increasing health inequities in the world, the need for a more open dialogue and closer cooperation between states and non-state stakeholders across a range of global policy arenas, and the consideration of health in policy fields outside the health sector. Moreover, the need for research and development that meets the needs of the poorest remains urgent, just as the challenge to implement and finance universal health coverage worldwide.

France is pursuing several different channels of involvement in global health, including classical multilateral negotiations, bilateral cooperation, and multilateral development aid delivered through newly established institutions, such as the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)**, UNITAID and the GAVI Alliance. The GFATM in particular was strongly supported by France from the onset, and remains key to France’s efforts to promote better health in low- and middle-income countries.

In order to strengthen bilateral cooperation, the **ESTHER network of hospitals** was created, which allows a twinning of hospitals in low- and middle-income countries with hospitals in France.

Moreover, a new French Agency for International Technical Expertise was created in July 2014 by the **French Law on Development Aid**. The adoption of this law is an important landmark, as until then, development aid was treated only in the general finance law. Moreover, the Law on Development Aid explicitly states that France considers health to be a basic human right, and reaffirms four priority areas for cooperation in health:

1. the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria
2. mother and child health
3. the fight against neglected tropical diseases
4. universal health coverage.

Integrating these issues into the post-2015 development agenda has been a key goal of French global health diplomacy.

Another priority for France is **international health security**, which comes to the forefront in times of international crisis like the current Ebola crisis. This crisis highlights the need to accelerate progress on countries' capacity to prevent, detect and respond to public health emergencies. France strongly supports the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR), and participates in the US-led initiative on the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) as does Germany. France also supports IARC the International Agency for research on Cancer, a WHO Office in Lyon.



Students from francophone countries participating at the Workshop

Moreover, in September 2006, the foreign affairs ministers of Norway and France launched the **Global Health and Foreign Policy Initiative**, which aims to bring health issues more strongly into the arenas of foreign policy. This initiative now includes the ministers of foreign affairs and of health of seven countries, including five emerging economies (South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, Senegal and Thailand). It has led, among others, to the adoption of the Oslo Ministerial Declaration on Global Health and Foreign Policy in 2007. Later, the initiative was a driving force behind the resolution on Global Health and Foreign Policy adopted by the United National General Assembly in December 2012. Finally, France has created together with Germany the **"Providing for Health" (P4H) initiative**, which is hosted by WHO, and which is partly financed through the French financial transaction tax.

## The EU agenda of global health

Canice Nolan (*Senior Coordinator for Global Health, European Commission, Brussels*) described the starting point of the EU's work in the field of global health as based on the idea that the EU has to raise its voice in global health diplomacy in order to stand up for its belief in the importance of multilateralism and the rule of international health law.

However, the first internal EU Commission roundtable on global health showed clearly that all the different participating directorates understood something different under global health. After this first roundtable meeting it took another year and a broad stakeholder consultation process to arrive at the first **EU Commission Communication on Global Health**, which was published in March 2010.

Shortly afterwards, the EU Council Conclusions on Global Health were adopted by the meeting of the EU ministers for foreign affairs on 10th May 2010. Once the Council Conclusions had been adopted, the Commission started to work on an **EU Action Plan on Global Health**. For this purpose, an inter-service commission group on global health was set up, with a rotating chairperson and shared ownership by the General Directorate (DG) Health, the DG Development Cooperation and the DG Research. This inter-service commission group met every six weeks, and regular meetings were held with experts from the member states, too.

Moreover, a second mechanism was created, the Global Health Forum, in order to involve stakeholders such as NGOs, Industry, third countries and UN organizations. Improving the cooperation between EU institutions and the WHO is another

important goal of the Commission's work in the field of global health. For this aim, a meeting between the Commission's global health team and European WHO country officers was held recently.

The Commission's work on the Action Plan is finished, but it is currently used only as an internal document, as there are restrictions to the publication of Action Plans by the Commission regarding their relevance and the procedure how they can be published. In particular, an impact assessment has to be conducted before a document can be classified as an Action Plan. As this would have delayed the process for at least one year, the Commission decided to use it as an internal document instead. On this basis the new Commission will continue working on global health with a strong global health team based in the General Directorates.

### Conclusion

The discussions showed that while responsibilities for global health are located in different sections of government in the two countries, there are a range of common projects that have been developed between the two countries at the global level, for example the "Providing for Health" (P4H) initiative. France has perhaps been more proactive in high profile initiatives than Germany- for example the flight ticket tax- and has been ahead of Germany in gaining significant support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for global health matters, as exemplified in the Global Health and Foreign Policy Initiative. Since the adoption in cabinet of the Federal Governments Strategy paper in 2013 Germany has been stepping up its global health activities in many ways including in the fight against Ebola, where an Ebola coordinator was appointed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both countries therefore now have «health ambassadors»- with France having one in the field of HIV/AIDs very early on.

The potential for the two countries to cooperate in global health is significant and could be strengthened even more, especially in relation to the SDGs and the reform debate of the World Health Organization. Especially though the two countries could join forces to strengthen the implementation of the EU council conclusions on global health. As global health becomes ever more intersectoral the cooperative approach within government chosen by both countries will gain in importance. Germany will have a special opportunity to strengthen global health in the context of its G7 presidency- and it has already put four health items on the agenda. France will contribute to global health in 2015 through its hosting of the climate summit in Paris.

The joint commitment of the two countries to equity, universal health coverage and human rights is essential for moving global health forward. Both countries have shown that global health can move forward if it has the commitment of the highest level of government- the French president, the German chancellor- and 2015 could be a turning point for the approach to global health in both countries.

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The Centre Virchow-Villermé for Public Health Paris-Berlin is a joint initiative of the M8-Alliance Members Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin and the University Sorbonne Paris-Cité. Initiated by the German-French council of ministers, it was founded in April 2013. The Centre Virchow-Villermé empowers the cooperation of German and French scientists and is open to structured international cooperation to achieve a sustainable improvement of health in Europe as well as to strengthen the contribution of both countries to Global Health.

During this year's World Health Summit, the Centre Virchow-Villermé hosted two workshops with the focus on Global Health. Another two workshops will complete this series in 2015.

For more information: [www.virchowvillermé.eu](http://www.virchowvillermé.eu)

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