

SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE FRENCH SENATE AND BUNDESRAT FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

Report on the visit to Bordeaux of a Bundesrat delegation, welcomed by the France-Germany Inter-Parliamentary Group

September 16th to 18th, 2015

From September 16th to 18th, 2015, the France-Germany inter-parliamentary group, chaired by Ms Catherine Troendlé, welcomed a delegation of the Bundesrat Germany-France inter-parliamentary group, headed by Mr Gerhard Robbers, Vice-Chair of the group.

During the meeting between the two friendship groups, the following topics were discussed: climate change leading up to the Paris Conference on Climate Change (I), teaching French and German as a basis for the partnership between France and Germany (II), the fight against jihadist radicalisation (III) and the European policy on asylum and immigration (IV).



Ms Catherine Troendlé, Chair, and Mr Gerhard Robbers, Vice-Chair, leading exchanges of views

I. Climate change, leading up to COP21

After pointing out that the French presidency of COP21 in December 2015 aimed to reach a global agreement on climate change in order to tackle the challenge it presents, Ms Catherine Troendlé said in her opening speech that the cumulative effect of national contributions should help achieve the overall goal of limiting global warming to below two degrees by the end of the century.

Mr Jean-Marie Bockel said that Parliaments, which link civil society and the Executive power, are associated with COP21 as part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He added that the Senate delegation to local authorities, which he chaired, was heavily involved in the process, and wished to contribute to it by highlighting **good practices within local authorities** in the fight against climate change. Indeed, a report by the Delegation on the leadership and drive of local authorities in that field, which will showcase **actual and significant achievements on the field**, will be finalized by the Congress of Mayors in November 2015.

Mr Bockel noted that although France once lagged behind in terms of energy transition and public transport development, it has now progressed significantly. **For example, he mentioned actions undertaken for the energy refurbishment of buildings, and the development of public transport**, such as achieved in Bordeaux, which members of the French Senate and Bundesrat delegations were able to witness during their visit.

Ms Fabienne Keller said the Finance Committee of the Senate was also involved in preparing COP21 through a **funding mission related to fighting against climate change for the least developed countries (LDCs)**.

She stressed that, in terms of climate discussions, the **LDCs were not sufficiently taken into account, even though they are the first to suffer the effects of climate change** due to their geographic location and their greater dependence on natural resources, while they have not even been major emitters of greenhouse gases.

In that respect, Ms Keller warned the French and German delegations against the **expected increase in migratory movements** due to climate warming: indeed, according to the United Nations, 250 million people may be affected by 2050.

In this context, one needs to **assess whether the French "climate finance" policy towards the LDCs** is adapted to their needs and the scale of climate change challenges. Furthermore, the **implementation of a 'low carbon' growth strategy** by the LDCs is a key element in the fight against climate change.

All members of the Bundesrat thanked the French Senate friendship group for choosing this topic for the exchange of views. They stressed the **high expectations surrounding the Paris Climate Conference and hopes to achieve concrete outcomes**. They deplored the fact that the fight against climate change, which should be implemented in the long term, is often overshadowed by shorter-term priority political concerns, as currently seen with the economic and refugee crises. However, the **long-term aspect** of the topic must be kept in mind, while **intermediate goals** must be set.

The Bundesrat delegation also said that **managing the phasing-out of fossil fuels was a major issue** in the fight against climate change.

The parliamentary section of COP21, held under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, will close at the French Senate on December 6th, 2015. In that perspective, the French and German delegations have co-signed the **following joint contribution**.

**Joint contribution
of the French Senate and Bundesrat France-
Germany inter-parliamentary friendship groups
for COP21**

At their 17th meeting in Bordeaux, the Sénat and Bundesrat France-Germany inter-parliamentary friendship groups discussed the issues of the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) and in that respect made the following proposals:

- 1) Ensuring – in our respective countries – an effective and coordinated implementation at European level of concrete measures for both States and local authorities;
- 2) Agreeing on long-term climate goals, specifying intermediate steps to achieve them;
- 3) Differentiating energy transition European aid allocated to territories according to their degree of commitment to the effective implementation of agreed measures;

4) Implementing an international tax on jet fuel applied to all countries around the world in order to build up resources for the Green Fund. Those resources would therefore be allocated, and used transparently, in the same way the international solidarity tax on airline tickets introduced in 2005 is used to fund the international organisation UNITAID;

5) Working together in a close French-German cooperation, to make proposals to the European Union for a genuine European energy market.

Bordeaux, Thursday, September 17th, 2015

Signatories:

The Chairs

of the French and German delegations

Ms Catherine Troendlé,

Chair of the France-Germany friendship group of the Senate

Pr Dr Gerhard Robbers,

Vice-Chair of the France-Germany friendship group of the Bundesrat

Attending Members of the Senate and Bundesrat friendship groups:

Mr Alain Gournac, Mr Jean-Marie Bockel, Ms

Fabienne Keller, Mr Claude Kern,

Senators

Dr Angelica Schwall-Düren, Ms Hella Dunger-Löper,

Ms Diana Golze, Mr Thomas Kralinski, Ms Ulrike

Hiller, Mr Michael Rüter, Mr Ralph Müller-Beck, Dr

Babette Winter,

Members of the Bundesrat



Mr Jean-Marie Bockel, Ms Fabienne Keller, Mr Alain Gournac and Claude Kern during exchanges of views on climate change

II. Language teaching as a base for the partnership between France and Germany

During debates, the senators and members of the Bundesrat discussed **the importance of language education for French-German cooperation**. Mr Claude Kern pointed out that promoting the teaching of one's partner's language had been reaffirmed at the 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty.

The German delegation expressed concern about the future of German teaching in France. It fears that the number of German learners will decrease as a result of the French secondary schools' reform, which suppressed bilingual classes, thus now preventing students to take up German in their first year of secondary school.

Fewer German speakers in France would jeopardize **the future of all French-German partnerships set up since the 1950s**, be it through twinning, institutional partnerships, associative or academic exchanges, dual curricula, or schemes managed by the French-German Youth Office, all of which make the French-German relationship so special. In that respect, Mr Gerhard Robbers stressed that **the French-German reconciliation had been a crucial step in European history and that the French-German friendship had become the driving force of the European Union**.

Members of the Senate and Bundesrat delegations expressed their concerns regarding the growing prevalence of English teaching, increasingly favoured and encouraged by both French and German parents to the detriment of other languages.

The senators and members of the Bundesrat stressed **the importance of having an excellent knowledge of one's neighbour's language, especially in cross-border regions**, where proficiency in both languages helps maintain the economic and cultural drive, and a harmonious community life.

They therefore committed to ensure that German teaching in France and French teaching in Germany would continue to be encouraged and boosted by voluntary initiatives – in schools, for example – or by strengthening student and teacher exchanges. The Senate and the Bundesrat could also both welcome school groups in order to engage students in the languages and improve their knowledge of the partner country.



The French Senate and Bundesrat delegations before the City Hall of Bordeaux

III. Fighting against jihadist radicalisation

The issue of the fight against jihadist radicalisation was also raised, and the participants mentioned that the process has multiple origins and is extremely difficult to gauge, making it arduous to respond to it specifically. Social prevention in the broad sense and fighting against discrimination naturally do have a role to play in improving social cohesion, but they alone cannot curb the phenomenon.

Mr Alain Gournac then presented to the members of the Bundesrat the work of the French Senate inquiry into the organisation and resources of the fight against jihadist networks in France and Europe.

IV. European asylum and immigration policy

After emphasising the refugees' extremely difficult journey into Europe, Ms Schwall-Düren said that in the first quarter of 2015 alone, 185,000 people had already applied for asylum within the European Union, an **86% increase** compared to the previous year at the same period.

In the German Land of **North Rhine – Westphalia** alone, **200,000 refugees** are expected in **2015**, an enormous challenge for both the Land and municipalities. As she recalled the Bundesrat opinion from July 10th, Ms Schwall-Düren welcomed the fact that the European Commission had set up a **European agenda on migration**, and she called for a **united solution across the European Union**, such as introducing a **repartition key** between Member States.

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During their visit to Bordeaux, the Senate and Bundesrat delegations were welcomed at City Hall by Ms Florence Forzy-Raffard, City Councillor in charge of European Affairs. They were also able to meet with Mr Wilfried Krug, General Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bordeaux.

The next meeting between the French Senate and Bundesrat friendship groups should be held in Germany in 2016.

Members of the French delegation



Ms Catherine TROENDLÉ
Chair of the group
Senator of Haut-Rhin
(The Republicans)



Mr Alain GOURNAC
Vice-Chair of the group
Senator of Yvelines
(The Republicans)



Mr Jean-Marie BOCKEL
Vice-Chair of the group
Senator of Haut-Rhin
(Union of Democrats and
Independents – UC,
UDI-UC)



Mr Claude KERN
Group secretary
Senator of Bas-Rhin
(Union of Democrats and
Independents – UC,
UDI-UC)



Ms Fabienne KELLER
Senator of Bas-Rhin
(The Republicans)

Members of the German delegation



Mr Gerhard ROBBERS
Vice-Chair of the group
Minister of Justice and Consumer
Protection of Rhineland-Palatinate
(SPD)



Ms Angelica SCHWALL-DÜREN
Minister for Federal Affairs,
Europe and Media of North Rhine-
Westphalia,
Plenipotentiary of North Rhine-
Westphalia to the Federal
Government (SPD)



Ms Hella DUNGER-LÖPER
Secretary of State,
Plenipotentiary of the Land of
Berlin to the Federal
Government and for Europe
(SPD)



Ms Diana GOLZE
Minister of Labour, Social
Affairs, Health, Women and
Family of Brandenburg
(Die Linke)



Mr Thomas KRALINSKI
Secretary of State,
Plenipotentiary of Brandenburg
to the Federal Government
(SPD)



Ms Ulrike HILLER
State Advisor for Federal Affairs, Europe and
integration, Plenipotentiary of the Free
Hanseatic City of Bremen to the Federal
Government and for Europe (SPD)



Mr Michael RÜTER
Secretary of State, Plenipotentiary of
Lower Saxony to the Federal
Government (SPD)



Mr Ralph MÜLLER-BECK
Secretary of State, Plenipotentiary of
Schleswig-Holstein to the federal
Government (SPD)



Ms Babette WINTER
Secretary of State at the Chancellery of
Thuringia for Europe and culture (SPD)

Members of the friendship group: http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_604.html