

## Franco-German press release

following the interview between Ministers Le Maire and Altmaier, 18 December.

**Bruno Le Maire, Minister of Economy and Finance, met with Peter Altmaier, German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy, on Tuesday 18 December in Paris. Before the Ministerial Conference of the Friends of Industry, Peter Altmaier's visit aimed at highlighting the importance of industrial cooperation between France and Germany. Industry is at the heart of Europe's economic power. It creates jobs and prosperity and stands as an example for the benefits of the European Single market. Furthermore, the ministers stressed the significance of EU cooperation for seizing the opportunities of key technologies of the future and disruptive innovation for the competitiveness of European industry.**

During their meeting, the ministers underlined the necessity for the European Union to rely on its industry to boost competitiveness and innovation in challenging times of digital transformation, climate change and fierce international competition. To this end, industrial policy ought to be streamlined and strengthened across the European Union by actively pursuing the “further deepening of the EU single market and promoting world class competitiveness of industry”, following on from the German-French Meseberg agreement in June 2018.

Ministers from EU Member States in charge of industrial policy and competitiveness will discuss priorities and industrial policy actions at the Friends of Industry Conference. It is their aim that the European Union gets a renewed and ambitious industrial policy without further delay.

On key industrial questions, unilateral answers won't be enough. We need coordinated actions between Member States, following the example of the future Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI) on microelectronics. Both governments eagerly await its official approval by the European Commission. Other possible areas where joint EU Member States' initiatives would deliver European added value by being more effective could include: physical and digital infrastructure, R&D and innovation policy and the promotion and protection of strategic value chains as well as of key technologies.

France and Germany are committed to increasing their industrial cooperation in three key areas: battery cell production in Europe, disruptive innovation and artificial intelligence.

### **Innovative and environmentally friendly industrial battery cell production in Germany and France**

Battery technology is a key enabling technology which will be indispensable across all areas of industrial value creation, particularly for the electrification of transport systems, storage of renewable energy, and electricity use in private households.

In a social market economy it is primarily the job of private companies to develop new technologies and make them ready for the market, and thus also to develop and establish industrially competitive battery cell production.

The governments of Germany and France will cooperate to develop a common approach for establishing an innovative and environmentally friendly industrial battery cell production in Europe which we want to elaborate in greater detail and implement over the next few months.

In order to achieve these objectives, France and Germany will together support the development of large projects at European scale, alliances which are currently being formed. France and Germany will work at full speed to develop industrial cooperation partnerships. The objectives will be laid down in the German – French declaration on battery cell production, and possible financial support will be examined as soon as the precondition of stable and sound economic requirements are met. Project proposals may qualify as Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI).

### **Breakthrough innovation**

France and Germany commit to seizing the opportunities that breakthrough innovations offer to boost economic growth and technological leadership as well as to overcome societal challenges in a more volatile world.

A close cooperation between both countries is of utmost importance to help tackle these challenges and develop new approaches to funding and building upon disruptive technologies.

Furthermore, France and Germany will jointly bring these issues up in the framework of the European Innovation Council at the European level, while aiming at a smart interplay between national and European levels.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

France and Germany jointly aim at strengthening European competitiveness in artificial intelligence (AI) and promote a human-centred application of AI technologies in accordance with European values of democracy, private public partnerships and the social market economy. Therefore they agree to promote Franco-German cooperation in research and development as well as in the application of artificial intelligence by structurally underpinning their partnership with a common research and innovation network.

To this end, they today established a joint working group on AI collaboration. As a first step, the working group will focus on bilateral activities which will include *inter alia* cross-border experimental zones; access to and use of data; joint initiatives to cooperate on technical and ethical standards, the exchange of best practices to achieve transfer of knowledge into businesses with special concern for small and medium enterprises. This Franco-German initiative shall pioneer the European efforts based on the Coordinated Plan on AI by the European Commission.