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POLL

European peoples behind Ukraine

The Ukrainian war seen from France, Germany, Italy and Poland

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The 6 key points in the overwhelming support of Europeans to Ukraine

01

84% have a good opinion of Ukraine, vs. 16 % for Russia.

02

75% have a good opinion of Volodymyr Zelensky; 9% of Vladimir Putin.

03

79% support economic and financial sanctions against Russia (of these 57% say they 'strongly approve').

04

67% support providing military equipment to Ukraine and 87% support taking in refugees.

05

71% support allowing Ukraine into the EU.

06

68% are in favor of creating a European army.

Introduction

Is Russia's war against Ukraine crystallizing unity amongst Europeans in a period of extreme tension on the international stage and in a tragic humanitarian context?

Governments are all standing behind Ukraine while seeking to avoid escalation and doing their utmost to find a diplomatic solution. Many Europeans are expressing their support for Ukraine by taking part in protests and launching numerous initiatives.

But what is the nature and extent of this support?

How do European citizens view their countries and their leaders?

Are they ready to provide military equipment or to take in refugees?

To have Ukraine become a member of the European Union (EU) ?

Do they view the creation of a European army as one of the possible responses to ensure that Europe is protected against the current threats?

These are some of the questions that the Yalta European Strategy (YES) and the Fondation Jean-Jaurès seek to answer through a novel European survey carried out by Ifop in four countries, France, Germany, Italy and Poland, from March 3 to 7 2022, one week after the beginning of the war.

The results of the survey in countries that together total 55% of the population of the EU, calls for an interpretation nuanced by the historical, geographical, sociological and political differences between and within these countries.

One conclusion stands out beyond a doubt: Europeans overwhelmingly support Ukraine.

Methodology

European views on the crisis in Ukraine

An Ifop survey conducted for Yalta European Strategy (YES) and the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, by means of an on-line self-administered questionnaire among a representative sample group based on quotas by age, gender, and profession, after stratifying the regions and type of urban agglomeration. .

The survey was conducted with the following sample groups, representative of the 18 and over age category:

- France : 1002 individuals ,
- Germany : 1011 individuals,

- Italy : 1001 individuals,
- Poland : 994 individuals.

Relative share of the population of the EU:

- France : 15,1 %,
- Germany : 18,6 %,
- Italy : 13,2 %,
- Poland : 8,5 %.

All figures given as an average for the four countries are a weighted average based on the population of each country.

The image of Russia, Ukraine, and their presidents

– Jérémie Peltier

European consensus against Russia and in favor of Ukraine

A survey in countries as different as France, Germany, Italy and Poland will inevitably give rise to differing responses that reflect the political and






territorial situation of each country as well as their unique cultural and historical features.

Yet what stands out regarding the war in Ukraine is the exceptionally strong consensus among the populations of these four countries in their opinion of Ukraine, Russia and their leaders.

Ukraine's and Russia's image

Question: You personally, do you have a very good opinion, somewhat good opinion, somewhat bad opinion or very bad opinion...?

TOTAL "Good opinion" (in %)

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
Of Ukraine	82	86	80	91	84
Of Russia	21	19	13	6	16

Starting with Ukraine, the survey shows that over 80% of the French, Germans, Italians and Poles respondents have a good opinion of Ukraine. If we take a closer look, it is noteworthy that the Poles, whose country borders on Ukraine and who are obviously the most 'directly concerned' by the ongoing conflict, express the most enthusiasm for Ukraine, with 90% holding a good opinion of the country, compared with 86% for the German respondents, 82% for the French and 80% for the Italian. The Polish case is even more impressive when we narrow it

down to just the respondents with a 'very good opinion' of Ukraine: they are only 18% in France, 23% in Germany and 25% in Italy, whereas they are 49% in Poland, that is every other person in the country.

Turning to the special case of France, it is interesting to note the 'war effect' on the way the French view Ukraine. While today 82% say that they have a good opinion of this country, they were only 60% to express this sentiment in December 2018, four years after the annexation of Crimea.

There is consensus on Ukraine certainly, but also regarding Russia. Indeed, the negative opinion is unanimous amongst the citizens of these four countries vis-à-vis Russia, with Poland once again holding the strongest positions: 6% of Poles have a positive opinion of Russia, compared with 13% of Italians, 19% of Germans and 21% of French. Here again, when we look only at people who say they have a 'very poor opinion' of Russia, the Polish position truly stands out: while 41% of French respondents, 44% of Germans and 53% of Italians say they have a very poor opinion of Russia, 75% of Poles feel this way, thus expressing their real rejection of the former 'big brother'.

Vladimir Putin vs. Volodymyr Zelensky

Much has already been said and written about the communication battle raging between Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky which is being conducted in parallel with the armed conflict. While the former has already lost the battle by sticking to a very outdated communication style in his face-off with a Ukrainian president who is nimble on social media and with instant communication, it is equally clear that Putin has also lost on another front, the battle of image.

This is what emerges when we look at public opinion in the four countries, albeit with some real differences. While 65% of French respondents – but with 21% having no opinion – and 67% of

Italians say they have a good opinion of Volodymyr Zelensky, in Germany the figure reaches 80%, and 93% in Poland which once again stands out in its overwhelming support for Ukraine and its president.

On the other hand, 12% of French people have a good opinion of Vladimir Putin, a view shared by 9% of Italians, 8% of Germans and only 3% of Poles.

Once again, this is even more enlightening when we look at the numbers of respondents at the extremes, with either a very good or a very poor opinion. While 65% of French respondents, 70% of the Italians and 73% of the Germans have a very negative opinion of Vladimir Putin, this is the case for 86% of the Poles. In the same vein, and even more spectacularly, while 19% of the French, 24% of Italian and 30% of German respondents have a very good opinion of Volodymyr Zelensky, 74% of the Poles express this opinion.

Some noteworthy features revealed






The radical left and radical right in Europe

While there is a very strong consensus regarding support to Ukraine and rejection of Russia, it is nevertheless worthwhile teasing out some differences that follow political affiliation in the four countries. In this respect one of the most striking features concerns voters and supporters of the radical left and the radical right in each one of the countries surveyed, who in all cases are the least 'critical' of Russia and Vladimir Putin.

Image of Ukraine's and Russia's leaders

Question: You personally, do you have a very good opinion, somewhat good opinion, somewhat bad opinion or very bad opinion...?

TOTAL "Good opinion" (in %)

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
Of Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president	65	80	67	93	75
Of Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation	12	8	9	3	9

In France, where 21% of respondents have a good opinion of Russia, a break-down according to affiliation shows that 43% of those supporting Mélenchon's La France insoumise, 25% of Eric Zemmour's Reconquête party and 22% of Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement national are in this category.

The same is true in Germany, where 19% of respondents have a good opinion of Russia, an opinion shared by 34% of people close to the radical left and 45% of those close to the radical right (AfD, NPD).

In Italy too, to a lesser extent, while 13% of the respondents had a positive opinion of Russia, that proportion was 19% in the case of respondents close to the radical left and 17% of those close to the radical right.

Even in Poland, despite the fact that the country stands out in this survey by way of the degree to which it detests Russia, we find the same phenomenon on the radical right: whereas 6% of Polish people have a positive opinion of Russia, the proportion of those close to the radical right was 21%.

The same specific phenomenon is found on both the radical left and the radical right when respondents were asked not about their opinion of Russia but about their opinion of Vladimir Putin.

In France, where 12% of all respondents said they had a positive opinion of the Head of the Kremlin, the proportion was 23% among respondents intending to vote for Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the first round of the forthcoming presential election and 17% among Éric Zemmour's supporters.

In Germany, where 8% of all respondents said they had a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin, that proportion was 27% among those close to the AfD and the NPD.

In Italy, where 9% of all respondents said they had a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin, the proportion was 15% among respondents close to the radical left and 10% of those close to the radical right (versus 4% of respondents close to the moderate right wing, for instance).

Finally, in Poland, whereas 3% of all respondents said they had a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin, the proportion was 11% among those close to the radical right.

Eastern Germany vs. western Germany

When analyzing European opinion concerning Ukraine and Russia, there is one remarkable aspect in the case of Germany, i.e. the difference of opinion between respondents in western Germany and eastern Germany concerning Russia and Vladimir Putin.

While 19% of all Germans had a positive opinion of Russia, the figure was as high as 30% of Germans living in the eastern part of the country (Brandenburg and Saxony) compared with 16% of those living in the western part of the country.

Similarly, with 8% of all Germans having a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin, the proportion was 15% of those living in the eastern part of the country versus 7% of their western counterparts.

The case of young people in France

Though differences of opinion are not very striking when public opinion is analyzed for the four countries, it is nonetheless noteworthy that young people in France are the only group to stand out among young generations in Europe concerning their opinions on Russia and Vladimir Putin.

In fact, while 21% of French people said they had a positive opinion of Russia, the figure was 30% among respondents under 35 and as high as 35% among those in the 18-24 age group, i.e. people who were not alive at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall (compared with 11% of young people aged 18 to 24 in Germany, for instance, or 14% of young Italians). Conversely, in France, among people who were 18 years old or more at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, i.e. those aged 50 to 64, only 13% said they had a positive opinion of Russia (the lowest approval rate of all age groups in France).

The particular case of young people in France also applies to Vladimir Putin's image: whereas 12% of French respondents had a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin, the proportion was 20% among those under 35, versus a mere 6% among those in the 50-64 age group. By comparison, only 9% of young Germans under 35 had a positive opinion of Vladimir Putin, and only 8% of young Italians.

Support for sanctions economic and financial against Russia

–Gilles Finchelstein

Russia was already under economic and financial sanctions since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. A new series of sanctions has been put in place by the European Union and the United States, since the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army on February 24. The public sanctions – first economic and financial, then in the world of sports – have been followed by sanctions imposed by private companies doing business in Russia.






How did the European citizens surveyed respond to these sanctions that are unprecedented both in their scope and the speed with which they were deployed?

The major finding is that the support for the sanctions is overwhelming. This can be seen in the average rate of approval of the four countries surveyed 79% and it is true for each country as well, with 72% in favor in France, and 91% in Poland and the highest rate of those against is 16%.

Beyond these figures it should be emphasized that the absolute majority of those in favor say they are ‘strongly in favor’ with 48% in France, 57% in Germany and in Italy and 79% in Poland.

Adherence to the economic and financial sanctions taken by the Europeans against Russia (in %)

Question: You know that European countries have taken economic and financial sanctions against Russia, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Do you personally approve or disapprove of the economic and financial sanctions taken by European countries against Russia?

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
TOTAL Approve	72	80	80	91	79
– Fully approve	48	57	57	79	57
– Somewhat, approve	24	23	23	12	22
TOTAL Disapprove	16	15	15	6	14
– Somewhat disapprove	9	8	9	3	8
– Fully disapprove	7	7	6	3	6
No opinion	12	5	5	3	7

Beyond this major finding, four features can be identified in the responses that are common to the four countries and deserve to be highlighted as they shed some light the minor differences of perception in otherwise overwhelming support.

First, the level of educational attainment provides one insight into the responses - in all countries the rate of support for sanctions increases with the level of education. Respondents without higher education are in the majority in favor of sanctions but with a gap of 14 points in France and Germany, 13 points

in Poland and 9 points in Italy between those with higher education degrees vs. those without.

Second, and perhaps more significantly, the closer one gets to the far right is a main factor that underlies lack of support for the sanctions in all four countries. In France the gap between Éric Zemmour supporters and those who vote for Emmanuel Macron is 20 points on the question of sanctions. In Germany only 46% of AfD supporters are in favor of sanctions as opposed to the 88% rate of support amongst CDU voters and 93% for the SPD.

Support for sanctions and vote intentions for the 2022 presidential election in France (1st round)

Jean-Luc Mélenchon	72
Yannick Jadot	92
Emmanuel Macron	90
Valérie Pécresse	87
Marine Le Pen	64
Éric Zemmour	70

Support for sanctions and political proximity in Germany

All left	89
Radical left	73
Moderate left (SPD, Grünen)	93
Center	87
All right	73
Moderate right (CDU/CSU)	88
Radical right (AfD, NPD)	46

Approval of support to Ukraine

– Gilles Finchelstein

Support for Ukraine can be in quite different forms. Two types of support were proposed to the respondents of this survey: the provision of military equipment for those fighting in Ukraine and taking in refugees fleeing Ukraine. Obviously, these two types of support are not mutually exclusive.

Here again, Europeans are facing a situation without precedent. Without precedent because the European Union – and even less so some of its Member States – has never provided military equipment in any such situation. Without precedent because we have never experienced such large numbers of refugees arriving at Europe’s borders, beginning with the Polish border.






Support for the provision of military equipment

Support is massive here again. There is a majority, and a large majority, in favor in all four countries surveyed. There is a wide gap between the percentage who approve and the percentage who disapprove: 86 percentage points in Poland, 45 in France, 38 in Germany and 22 in Italy.

However, this overwhelming support needs to be qualified in two respects:
– on the one hand, support for the provision of military equipment is not as strong as support for

Support for the supply of military equipment to Ukraine by the Europeans (in %)

Question: European countries have also decided to provide weapons of war to Ukraine to help it defend itself against the Russian invasion. Do you personally approve or disapprove of the supply of weapons of war to Ukraine by European countries?

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
TOTAL Approve	65	66	57	91	67
– Fully approve	35	37	28	74	40
– Somewhat, approve	30	29	29	17	27
TOTAL Disapprove	20	28	35	5	24
– Somewhat disapprove	12	14	16	3	12
– Fully disapprove	8	14	19	2	12
No opinion	15	6	8	4	9





economic and financial sanctions: -7 points in France, -14 points in Germany and, especially -23 points in Italy. This may be due to fear of being drawn into a situation that spirals out of control or to political cultures that are more reluctant to provide military equipment.

– on the other hand, support for the provision of military equipment is not as intense: only 28% of Italians, 35% of French and 37% of Germans said they “strongly” approved, with the Poles standing out once again at 74%.

Furthermore, the survey revealed features common to European countries that are somewhat different to those revealed in the case of support for economic sanctions.






On this issue, gender was important – and not just the level of education. In fact, in three of the countries surveyed, women were considerably more reluctant to send military equipment than men, with variances of 6 points in Germany, 10 points in Italy and even 16 points in France.

Support for the provision of military equipment by sex (in %)

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland
Men	73	69	62	91
Women	57	63	52	90

Support for hosting some of the Ukrainian refugees in one’s country (in %)

Question: You know that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are currently fleeing their country as a result of the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops. Would you personally be in favour or opposed to spreading these people among the different countries in Europe and to our country taking in some of them?

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
In favour	80	90	89	92	87
Not in favour	20	10	11	8	13

Moreover, political positioning had a considerable bearing but concerns the radical left as much as the radical right, with the French and German responses shedding light on the findings. In France, if we limit the scope to the five main candidates for the presidential election, the rate of approval is a mere 58% among people intending to vote for Éric Zemmour, 63% of those voting for Marine Le Pen and 65% among those voting for Jean-Luc Mélenchon; the rate of approval is highest among people intending to vote for Valérie Pécresse (82%) and Emmanuel Macron (83%). In Germany, it stands at 36% on the extreme right and 46% on the radical left, but conversely at 77% among CDU voters and 82% of SPD supporters.

Support for taking in refugees

The power of imagery such as feeling close to Ukrainians is the reason behind scores that are spectacular on two counts:

- Spectacular by the sheer volume of support: with scores of 80% in France, 89% in Italy, 90% in Germany and 92% in Poland, we are close to unanimous support and Europeans are speaking with one voice;

Spectacular by the size of the shift: faced with a large-scale refugee crisis in 2015, Europe's governments and populations were divided. While support for taking in refugees has risen by 11 percentage points in Germany (with approval at 66% among

AfD voters) and by 12 points in Italy, the shift is most remarkable in France (+36 points) where three-quarters of Éric Zemmour's and Marine Le Pen's voters approve.

Adherence to the reception of part of the Ukrainian refugees in his country - Comparison with the adherence to the reception of migrants from the Mediterranean (September 2015)





Question: Personally, would you be in favour of or opposed to these people being spread among the different countries of Europe and to our country receiving some of them?

Evolution of "Favourable" responses (in %)

 France			 Germany			 Italy		
Sept. 2015	March 2022	<i>Evol.</i>	Sept. 2015	March 2022	<i>Evol.</i>	Sept. 2015	March 2022	<i>Evol.</i>
46	80	+36	79	90	+11	77	89	+12

The only (slight) nuance concerning this quasi-unanimity is not entirely intuitive. One might have thought that young people would be the most supportive of taking in refugees, but it turns out to be exactly the opposite with gaps of 4 points in Italy, 8 in Poland, 10 in Germany and 12 in France between under 25s and over 65s.

Support for taking in refugees by age (in %)

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland
18-35 age group	73	86	89	90
+ 65 years old	85	96	93	98
Gap	12	10	4	8

Support for Ukraine joining the European Union

–Gilles Finchelstein

Ever since 2004, i.e. since the inclusion of the central and eastern European countries, the question of enlarging Europe has been on the table.

It has been raised within the European Union which is experiencing what is sometimes referred to as “enlargement fatigue” and which, during this same period, has had to deal with not just Turkey’s application for membership proving increasingly difficult to manage as Turkey moved away from the values of EU countries, but also with a protracted Brexit, not forgetting the numerous crises that succeeded one another.

The issue of enlargement has also been raised on several occasions by Ukraine, particularly after the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014.

The war in Ukraine has changed the situation: on March 7, 2022, the Ambassadors representing the EU’s 27 Member States in Brussels invited the Commission to present its recommendation on the EU membership applications of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.






If we compare the findings of this recently conducted survey with those of previous European surveys on the same issue¹, we arrive at two major conclusions:

1- Support for Ukraine’s accession has never been stronger than it is now.

2- Support for Ukraine’s accession has risen in all four countries surveyed: by comparison with 2007, support increased by 6 points in France, 12 points in Italy, 18 in Poland and 25 in Germany ; by comparison with 2014 (Franco-German survey only), the increase is even more striking with +31 points in Germany and +33 points in France.

Support for Ukraine’s entry into the European Union (in %)

Question: Personally, are you in favour or opposed to Ukraine's entry into the European Union?

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
In favour	62	69	71	91	71
Not in favour	38	31	29	9	29

1. Notably by YES from 2005 with TNS Opinion and by IFOP for Le Figaro.

Finally, an analysis of the situations in France and Germany gives us a better understanding of these changes.

In Germany, while the opponents of Ukrainian accession were in the majority in 2007 as in 2014, now only 29% of respondents are opposed to the idea. However, support for membership is as high as 71% among CDU supporters and 79% among those of the SPD. Even in eastern Germany, where

opposition to enlargement traditionally runs high, 56% are in favor. Now only a majority of AfD supporters remain hostile (59%).

In France, the working class and young people are now just as much in favor of Ukraine's accession as the other categories (they were less in favor beforehand), with even 61% of Marine Le Pen's voters approving. The only category with a majority against Ukraine's accession is Éric Zemmour supporters (61%).

Memorandum on European defense : 'lifting the taboo'

—Amandine Clavaud

As the EU heads of state and government meet in Versailles on March 10 and 11 for a European Council meeting under the French Presidency of the EU to discuss the Russia's war on Ukraine, European sovereignty, also referred to as 'the strategic autonomy of Europe' or 'the European strategic compass' appears to be producing actions.

On February 27, following the statement by President Ursula Von Der Leyen, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, announced that the European Union (EU) would finance the purchase and delivery of lethal weapons and equipment worth 500 million € through the European Peace Facility, created to provide assistance under emergency measures. Europe's chief diplomat was quick to emphasize that this was a historic first for the EU: 'Another taboo has fallen. The taboo that the European Union was not providing arms in a war. Yes, we are doing it. [...] This will be the first time in history that the EU will be providing lethal equipment to a third country.'¹

On March 2, French President Emmanuel Macron went further: 'We cannot depend on others to defend ourselves on the ground, at sea, under the oceans, in the air, in space or in cyberspace. To this end, our European Defense must reach a new level.'² This was the very purpose of the European Summit.

The *Survey European views on the crisis in Ukraine* conducted by Ifof in partnership with Yalta European Strategy and the Fondation Jean-Jaurès polled a

representative panel of public opinion in four European countries - France, Germany, Italy and Poland - on the perception of European security and defense policy and what is at stake in the building of a 'Europe of Defense'.

Strong support for Europe's decision to supply Ukraine with military equipment and weapons

Facing an extensive war being waged on the European continent and the fear it is causing, the citizens of European countries who responded to the survey broadly approve, not surprisingly the decision of European governments to supply weapons to Ukraine to help the country to defend itself against the invasion by Russia. 57% of Italians respondents approve, as do 65% of the French people, 66% of Germans and 91% of Poles. There are several reasons behind such high approval rates, that are both geographical and historical. The closer we get to Ukraine, the stronger the support in favor of the EU providing weapons; in Germany 66% are in favor while in Poland the figure reaches 91%. The massive support for these measures in Poland - 9 out of 10 Poles support providing arms to Ukraine - is a direct result of the perceived threat of war at Poland's border,

1. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_1463

2. <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-19386-fr.pdf>

given the very long border it shares with Ukraine, and because of Poland's past as a member of the Soviet bloc. Support is strongest among the 18-24 age group, at 94% in favor, and in the 65 and over age group at 93%.

Germany comes in second place in terms of the percentage of people polled in favor. This is of course a reflection of Chancellor Scholz's statement of February 27 in which he announced that 100 billion € would be spent to modernize the German armed forces and that the defense budget would increase, thereby reversing the traditional German stance of not investing in the military. The split between East and West on this question is however significant, with the population of Brandenburg and Saxony much less favorable at 55% and 42% respectively, while the Rhineland and Lower Saxony in the western part of the country stand at 76% and 71%. This division reflects the country's history, cut in half during the Cold War with West Germany aligned with the United States and East Germany with the USSR.

Lastly, Italy shows the lowest level of support for these measures with only 57% of respondents in favor, while in France the figure is 65%, just behind Germany. This comes as more of a surprise given that France has one of the strongest militaries in the EU and is a driving force behind the creation of

a European Defense; one might therefore have assumed that public opinion would have a better grasp of the threats and what facing them involves.






Strong support for the creation of a European army: how European defense policy can lead to greater European integration

In answer to the question 'Are you personally strongly in favor, somewhat in favor or not at all in favor of the creation of a European army?' the German and French responses are close, with 68% of French people and 66% of Germans responding yes. The Italians are stable, 59% of respondents saying yes vs. 62% in March 2014.

The war in Ukraine is a major catalyst for public support in European countries for stronger European integration in common security and defense. In March 2014, 64% of French people supported the idea and since then that figure has progressed by 4 points. But it is in Germany that the turn-around in public sentiment is the most dramatic: from March 2014

Support for the creation of a European army (in %)

Question: You personally, would you be completely in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat not in favour or not at all in favour of the creation of a European army?

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland	 Average of all four countries
TOTAL In favour	68	66	59	87	68
– Fully in favour	27	16	26	47	26
– Somewhat, in favour	41	50	33	40	42
TOTAL Not in favour	32	34	41	13	32
– Somewhat not in favour	18	24	23	9	20
– Fully not in favour	14	10	18	4	12





to March 2022 the rate of approval has gained 22 points, going from 44% to 66%. The previous reluctance of Germany, based on its internal assessment of defense matters, has undergone a radical shift in approach, bringing it more in line with the French position. The Franco-German couple, the true engine of European construction, seems to be stepping into closer alignment, and public opinion in the two countries seems to be strengthening the determination of the political leadership of both countries to be more

united in their support of Ukraine and firm stance against Russia.

In this regard, support for the creation of European defense is strongest in Poland. 87% of Poles are in favor of this goal. 91% of young people in the 18-24 age group are in favor, reflecting a strong pro-European sentiment amongst those who grew up in a country that joined the EU in 2004 and never knew it as a part of the Soviet bloc, and have an abiding fear of the threat of war in Ukraine.

Support for the creation of a European army (in %)

Question: You personally, would you be completely in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat not in favour or not at all in favour of the creation of a European army?

	 France	 Germany	 Italy	 Poland
March 2022	68	66	59	87
March 2014	64	44	62	

There is another interesting finding that relates to the profile of those who are reluctant to embrace the notion of a European army. Voters with right-leaning political sympathies are the least likely to be supportive with only 60% of voters saying they intend to vote for Marine Le Pen and 62% of those intending to vote for Éric Zemmour in favor of the concept, whereas there is 97% support among those who support Yannick Jadot. The same holds true in the other countries polled, in Germany only 42% people who vote for AfD or NPD are in favor of creating a European army; in Poland, 54% of voters on the far right approve. The same is true at the other end of the political spectrum with the radical left in France, Germany and Italy with lower levels support than the national average: 56% among voters supporting La France insoumise (vs. 68% for all of France), 56% for the radical left in Germany (vs. 66% for all Germans), 54% for the radical left in Italy (vs. 59% for Italy at large). These results illustrate the ambivalent relationship these parties and their supporters have with the EU, Eurosceptics on the one hand and those wanting to engage in a power struggle with European institutions on the other.

While the idea of a European defense force is gaining acceptance in Europeans public opinion, becoming firmer as international events unfold, there are nuances to the level of support based on the history of each country, Europe's common history, geography and political cleavages.

A 'geopolitical' European Union

Deepening European security and defense policy to guarantee European sovereignty is therefore not only necessary but unavoidable given the geopolitical events that are unfolding. Made a policy priority at the 2013 European Council meeting on defense, it was further strengthened with the permanent structured cooperation launched in 2017 and then financed through the European Defense Fund; these are the tools at hand to advance to advance European Defense. While the 'European strategic compass' was

on the agenda of the European Council meeting on March 10 and 11 held in Versailles under the French presidency of the EU, the war in Ukraine shows how urgent it is to translate it into policy to give 'member states the common ambition to respond to the challenges the EU is facing with concrete objectives and outcomes in the next five to ten years'.¹

The lines are shifting within the EU. The Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen, a social-democrat, announced Denmark would hold a referendum to ask the Danish people to join the European security and defense policy that the country had opted out of as one of the conditions set by Denmark to sign the Maastricht Treaty. Other measures were adopted as well, including a 2% of GDP budget allocation to defense by 2033 and additional financing of one billion € for defense over

the next two years. This shows that the determination displayed by Ursula von Der Leyen and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and security policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, to give Europe a 'geopolitical' dimension, up until now wishful thinking, is starting to pay off. But to make this come true, the EU will have to claim its place and sovereignty on the international stage, clarify its position with its allies – both the US and NATO – and stand united to meet the challenges inherent in a common European security and defense policy. The challenge will be in finding the right balance that will allow for a resolution of the conflict and guarantee the long-term protection and security of its citizens on European soil in the face of the multiform nature of threats (high-intensity war, asymmetrical and hybrid conflicts, cyberattacks, etc.).

1. Press release, La Commission dévoile des actions significatives visant à contribuer à la défense européenne, à stimuler l'innovation et à remédier aux dépendances stratégiques, February 15, 2022

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