

Macron issues call for a 'new era' in Europe



PA/Reuters/Berlin

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel presented a united front in the face of multiple challenges for Europe as the French leader visited Berlin yesterday.

"Today we must begin a new era," Macron said in an address made to German parliament after taking part in a series of events to commemorate those who had died in war.

With European Parliament elections looming next May, the French president has also urged pro-European Union forces to rally and take concrete policy steps in a bid to fend off anti-immigrant, nationalist parties on the rise in several member states.

Macron and Merkel are striving to present plans for a joint budget for the eurozone in the middle of December, which is intended to better protect the integrity of the euro area.

Germany and France agreed on a proposal on Friday, according to a document seen by DPA.

At a joint press conference, Merkel stressed the importance of Franco-German friendship at a moment when Europe “stands at a crossroads” and that it was time to “really deliver”.

In a speech to the German lower house of parliament, Macron said the onus was on France and Germany to pursue those efforts.

“This new phase can be scary as we will have to share, pool together our decision-making, our policies on foreign affairs, migration and development, an increasing part of our budgets and even fiscal resources, build a common defence strategy,” Macron said at the Bundestag. “We have to overcome our taboos and overcome our habits.”

At an earlier event in the German capital, Macron called on young people to fight for a peaceful, open Europe.

“We find ourselves at a very important point in history,” Macron said during the meeting with young people from all over the world.

“A young generation can only build the future if it knows the past. Create an open, ambitious Europe,” he said at the session, entitled 100 Ideas for Peace.

November 18 is a national day of mourning in Germany to show solidarity with those left behind after their loved ones were killed in World War I, and to remember all victims of war.

Over the past few days, 500 young people from 48 countries in Europe,

Africa and the Middle East have been meeting in Berlin to discuss how to safeguard peace and how cohesion can be strengthened.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier echoed Macron’s comments.

“Above all, we need fresh ideas,” Steinmeier said.

“We have a responsibility to renew and maintain” the European unity achieved so far, he said, referring to it as a “miracle”.

Macron had last week warned against the perils of nationalism at commemorations in Paris to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, sparking an outcry from US President

Donald Trump, who blasted the French leader on Twitter days later.

In five posts sent on November 13, the same day that French officials marked the anniversary of the 2015 terrorist attacks that killed 130 people in Paris, Trump blasted the key US ally over its near defeat to Germany in two world wars, its wine industry and Macron's approval ratings.

"By the way, there is no country more Nationalist than France, very proud people – and rightfully so!" Trump wrote in other tweets, ending with "MAKE FRANCE GREAT AGAIN!"