

**Putting politics into practice:
The role of the Franco-German Youth Office
in promoting lasting ‘friendship’ through
exchange programmes**

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Introduction

“Ich beglückwünsche Sie zunächst jung zu sein...” proclaimed Charles de Gaulle on the 9 of September 1962.¹ The French president was opening his address to the German public in Ludwigsburg, an event that would later be recorded as significant in the history of Franco-German friendship. Accounts from young people in attendance commend the president’s use of German and describe afterwards feeling motivated to familiarise themselves with their French neighbours.² The Franco-German ‘friendship’ that de Gaulle spoke of was political in nature, but soon attempts were made to enforce this relationship at other levels.

Within a matter of months, the Élysée Treaty had been drawn up, and was signed on 22 January 1963 between the French president and the chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Konrad Adenauer.³ This treaty aimed to promote cooperation between the two administrations in the areas of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Education and Youth.⁴ As part of this final element in the agreement, there was the creation of the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO), maintaining de Gaulle’s original focus on the participation of young French and Germans.

But why focus on the younger members of society? According to Eric Hobsbawm, by the 1960s teenagers were increasingly displaying ‘astonishing internationalism’ in their popular and personal interests, as well as feeling unable to empathise with the older generations who still remembered the Second World War.⁵ This younger generation was also experiencing new levels of autonomy, notably in terms of movement. Increasingly, young French and Germans were involved in informal travel to

¹ Charles de Gaulle, ‘Le Général De Gaulle s’adresse à la jeunesse allemande à Ludwigsburg’, online video recording, Lumni | Enseignement, 9 September 1962, <<https://enseignants.lumni.fr/fiche-media/00000001430/le-general-de-gaulle-s-adresse-a-la-jeunesse-allemande-a-ludwigsburg.html>> [accessed 4 November 2019] 00 :01 :27

² Deutsch-Französisches Institut; Universität Mannheim, Historisches Institut, Lehrstuhl für Neuere Geschichte, *Als Charles de Gaulle Deutsch sprach: die Rede an die deutsche Jugend in Ludwigsburg 1962 im Spiegel von Zeitzeugen; Zeitzeugenprojekt in Kooperation mit dem dfi Ludwigsburg*, dfi compact N.12 (Ludwigsburg: Deutsch-Französisches Institut, 2014) pp. 145-167.

³ Throughout this dissertation the term ‘German’ will be used to refer to those from the FRG. For further work on the relations between the GDR and France, see *Die DDR in den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen*, ed. by Anne Kwaschik and Ulrich Pfeil (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013).

⁴ ‘Text of the Elysee Treaty (Joint Declaration of Franco-German Friendship)’, Atlantic Council, 2013 <<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/text-of-the-elysee-treaty-joint-declaration-of-francogerman-friendship/>> [accessed 5 October 2019].

⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995) p. 326.

neighbouring countries, making use of youth hostels, some of which even offered their own forms of exchange programmes.⁶

Separately, there was also the ongoing development of new collaborative institutions on a wider European level, such as the European Economic Community (EEC). With this backdrop in mind, the young generation in both France and the FRG found themselves part of a shifting dynamic that was increasingly outward looking. Politicians in both countries saw a need to consolidate bilateral ties within this level of society in order to build on existing links that had been solidifying in the post-war years. This was a strategic political investment that manifested itself in the educational strategies of both administrations, but also in the emphasis on cultural friendship that would supposedly lay the groundwork for cordial bilateral relations in the future.

The cooperation between France and the FRG has been notably highlighted in public narratives. H  l  ne Miard-Delacroix points out that this relation is often labelled either a ‘Paar’, ‘Tandem’, ‘Achse Paris-Bonn’ or ‘Motor’.⁷ Much of the scholarship that surrounds the   lys  e Treaty, and the subsequent FGYO, aims to analyse this supposed ‘myth’ of the Franco-German friendship. Bo Str  th defines the development of a societal myth as something that becomes ‘a constituent element of politics and social cohesion’⁸.

With this definition in mind, it is easy to see how the narrative of a lasting friendship rapidly found its way into not only popular media, but also into educational textbooks. In a preliminary study for the Georg Eckert Institute, Christine P  gler writes that up until the 1980s, the   lys  e Treaty was often depicted as the definitive starting point for Franco-German reconciliation.⁹ However, by the 1990s, there was a focus on showing the treaty as part of the foundation of the future EU, with a more general focus on Franco-German history.¹⁰ Scholars today recognise this narrative surrounding the   lys  e treaty. Various studies attempt to dispel the idea of the treaty as the main

⁶ Nikolaos Papadogiannis, ‘‘Keeping with contemporary times’’: Social tourism and West German youth hostel organizations, 1950s-1980s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51(2016), 660-687, p. 670.

⁷ H  l  ne Miard-Delacroix, *Im Zeichen der europ  ischen Einigung, 1963 bis in die Gegenwart*, Deutsch-Franz  sische Geschichte, 11 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), p. 308.

⁸ Bo Str  th, ‘Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community’ in *Myth and Memory in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*, ed. by Bo Str  th, Multiple Europes, No. 9 (Brussels: P.I.E.-P. Lang, 2000). pp. 19-46 (p. 28).

⁹ Christine P  gler, ‘The   lys  e Treaty of 1963: the foundational myth of Franco-German friendship?’ in *Myths in German-Language Textbooks. Their Influence on Historical Accounts from the Battle of Marathon to the   lys  e Treaty*, ed. by Roland Bernhard and others (Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, 2019) pp. 287-306 (p. 292)

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 296.

foundation of Franco-German friendship, and in recent years have even been more critical of its legacy.¹¹

Several others went down the route of portraying Franco-German relations in terms of Europeanisation. Patricia Clavin writes that Europeanisation goes beyond just the ‘process of cultural, political and organizational change along European lines’ but that there is also a sense of ‘emulation, exchange and entanglement.’¹² Elements of this are seen in studies that highlight the supranational politics at play in the transnational discourses between France and Germany.

Other transnational studies focus on the cultural outcomes of the treaty that caused cross-border movement of people and ideas. This can be seen most typically in the publications that have been released in recent years, celebrating the anniversaries of the FGYO, such as *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales : L’Office franco-allemand pour la jeunesse 1963-2008*, edited by Hans Manfred Bock, Corine Defrance, Gilbert Krebs and Ulrich Pfeil.¹³ The editors of this volume in particular make up some of the key figures who have contributed to the research on the history of the office itself.

The objective of this work was originally to offer a longitudinal study, exploring how the activities of the Franco-German Youth Office impacted the lives of young participants. This would have included investigating patterns of movement, to see if exchange experiences had prompted a development of ties with the partner country in later life. However, it is unfortunately outwith the scope of this dissertation to collect testimonies from former participants in FGYO programmes in order to construct this narrative.

Instead, this dissertation will offer a case study that shows how the FGYO shaped the transnational interactions of young people, and how it supported a lasting framework to allow participants to build on the notion of ‘friendship’ that was introduced with the Élysée Treaty. To do so, the official activity reports from the office will be used to show the goals created by its administration, and the actions subsequently taken. In order to offer some movement away from an institutional level of inquiry, personal testimonies

¹¹ Wolf Jöckel, ‘Der Elysee-Vertrag, Mythos und Symbol, wird 50: Ein Anlass zum Feiern’, *Europäische Erziehung*, 42 (2012), 5-17 (p. 8).

¹² Patricia Clavin, ‘Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts’, *European History Quarterly*, 40(2010), 624–40 (p. 631).

¹³ *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales : L’Office franco-allemand pour la jeunesse 1963-2008*, ed. by Hans Manfred Bock and others, (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2008).

from the FGYO anniversary publications will also be incorporated, along with secondary literature from political and historical perspectives.

This study will begin by examining the background to, and creation of, the Élysée Treaty to promote Franco-German cooperation on a cultural level, highlighting how the FGYO came into being. The second chapter will cover, in depth, the variety of exchange programmes that the office presented in its initial years, also focusing on the relationship to other pre-existing organisations. The final part of this study will offer a brief selection of testimonies from former FGYO participants, including an overview of the routes that it facilitated for further engagement with the partner country.

Chapter 1: What did the Élysée treaty set out to do?

In the years after the war, French and German society developed at different rates. Each population had different memories of the war and different societal values, still holding the old wartime image of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Only tentative efforts had been made to establish communication on a widespread cultural level.¹⁴ However, this last element is important because there had, at least, been some established efforts at introducing formal Franco-German relations well before the Élysée Treaty. This chapter will discuss in further depth these precursors in order to better understand the concept of ‘friendship’ that it championed. Later the content of the treaty itself will also be discussed. This focus is necessary because the signing of the treaty set in motion the bureaucratic processes required to bring the FGYO into fruition. Most importantly, it prioritised official support for bilateral youth relations.

The creation of cultural organisations relating to Franco-German communication and collaboration was certainly not a novel idea in 1963. Already as early as 1926 there was the foundation of the *Comité franco-allemand/Deutsch-Französische Studienkomitee*, which was aimed at promoting relations in various industries after the First World War, but also began to incorporate cultural representation too.¹⁵ The emphasis on Franco-German cooperation developed in the years after 1945, with the appearance of a number of organisations promoting exchanges. In France, 1945 saw the creation of the *Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation (BILD)* which had a focus on relations with the FRG, as well as the foundation of the *Comité français d’Échanges avec l’Allemagne nouvelle* in 1948. Both of these groups supported cultural exchange.¹⁶ Most importantly, they were already opening up the sphere of supported transnational movement to young people, with François Altmayer, the general secretary for the FGYO from 1963 to 1968, viewing them as ‘une véritable œuvre de pionniers’.¹⁷

Similarly, in West Germany, there was a growth of institutions promoting bilateral relations. It is worth noting here that in the allied-occupied zones attempts were made to

¹⁴ Hartmut Kaelble, ‘Die sozialen und kulturellen Beziehungen Frankreichs und Deutschlands seit 1945’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, (2003), 1-5, <<http://www.bpb.de/apuz/27860/die-sozialen-und-kulturellen-beziehungen-frankreichs-und-deutschlands-seit-1945>> [accessed 17 November 2019], p. 2.

¹⁵ Hans Manfred Bock, *Projekt deutsch-französische Verständigung: Die Rolle der Zivilgesellschaft am Beispiel des Deutsch-Französischen Instituts in Ludwigsburg* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1998), p. 27.

¹⁶ Corine Defrance, ‘The Élysée Treaty in the Context of Franco-German Socio-Cultural Relations’, *German Politics & Society*, 31.1 (2013), 70–91 (p. 76).

¹⁷ François Altmayer, ‘La coopération culturelle franco-allemand’, *L’Europe en formation*, 69 (1965), 25–8 (p. 25).

further international relations between the FRG, Britain and the US. For example, the *Deutsch-Englische Austauschstelle (GER) e.V.* in Bonn sought to improve cultural relations between Britain and Germany, supporting a number of youth exchanges in the early 1950s.¹⁸ However, the growth in organisations particularly focused on Franco-German activity was unparalleled.

One of these organisations was the *Deutsch-Französisches Institut (DFI)*, founded in Ludwigsburg in 1948. It not only began collaborative research projects, but also offered language classes and informal exchanges. Furthermore, in the 1950s there was the foundation of groups for French and German veterans and prisoners of war. Although these groups varied in popularity, and had a measure of success, Corine Defrance deems this as an ‘early process of bilateral rapprochement’ and the process certainly involved an overcoming of distrust for many.¹⁹ However, both of these organisations worked largely with adults only.

Where we can see further action taken in both France and the FRG is in the planning of town partnerships. This phenomenon was supported by the Council for European Municipalities, and the first Franco-German twinning occurred between Ludwigsburg and Montbéliard in 1950. By the time the Élysée Treaty was created there were already 120 town partnerships.²⁰ Once these partnerships were in place, many of them placed a focus on including young people in their activities. Hans Manfred Bock recognises the importance of these partnerships, which stemmed from supranational private initiatives. He writes that they aimed to build ‘Europa von unten’.²¹ Certainly, the local level of the activities would later prove extremely beneficial to the work of the Franco-German Youth Office in its transnational activity.

Additionally, in 1957, the *Fédération des Associations Franco-Allemandes pour l’Europe (FAFA)* was founded, with its German counterpart being the *Vereinigung Deutsch-Französischer Gesellschaften für Europa e.V. (VDFG)*.²² These two

¹⁸ Robert F. Lawson, ‘The English Approach to Educational Reorientation in Postwar Germany’, *Comparative Education Review*, 8 (1964), 58–64 (p. 63).

¹⁹ Defrance, ‘The Élysée Treaty in the Context of Franco-German Socio-Cultural Relations’, p. 77.

²⁰ Council of European Municipalities and Regions, ‘Twinning for Tomorrow’s world’, 2007 <https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/twinning_for_tomorrows_world_en.pdf> [accessed 2 December 2019] p. 3.

²¹ Hans Manfred Bock ‘Transnationalisierung als zeitdiagnostisches Kennwort und Zeitgeschichtliches Konzept für die deutsch-französischen Beziehung nach 1945’ in *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945: zivilgesellschaftliche Annäherungen*, ed. by Corine Defrance, Michael Kissener, and Pia Nordblom (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2010), pp. 349-377 (p. 369).

²² Hans Manfred Bock, ‘Les racines de l’OFAJ dans la société civile’ in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 15-38 (p. 18).

organisations worked together and supported existing town-twinning initiatives, including other bilateral civil activities involving music and sports.

In terms of political steps that were equally significant, the Schuman Plan in 1950 aimed to place all of France and West Germany's coal and steel production under a common authority. Albeit not a cultural element, this was an important precursor to the 1963 treaty as it was a solid step forwards in terms of acting towards reconciliation between the two nations. Perhaps the most public precursor to emerge before the signing of the treaty was the widely reported on personal friendship between de Gaulle and Adenauer.²³ The two state leaders had often been photographed during de Gaulle's tour of Germany in 1962, which allowed the two politicians to create a clear, emotional image of rapprochement for the public. Certainly, by this point in time, the two societies were more aligned. They had similar economic developments and family structures that looked the same. There was a reduction of societal differences and they held similar social values.²⁴ In the eyes of Georg Walther Heyer, the time of the Élysée Treaty's creation simply cannot be viewed as the *Punkt Null* of Franco-German rapprochement, as all the evidence in place shows that it had been ongoing since the end of the Second World War.²⁵

The Treaty itself does not explicitly mention a framework for the carrying out of 'friendship' initiatives. The third section relating to 'Education and Youth' is in itself extremely brief.²⁶ The first part of this section is split into three issues. Firstly, it states that both the French and German governments planned to place an emphasis on language tuition, in order to aid cooperation with the partner country. This curriculum change would take place in secondary schools, with an introduction of practical language courses in higher education institutions for students. Secondly, the issue of equivalences is addressed, calling for similar diplomas, examinations and semesters between the countries, to allow for easier movement to study and work. Lastly, this section calls for cross-border cooperation from research institutes, particularly for the building up of contacts to create networks. The second part of this section is concerned with 'youth'. It

²³ '„Freundschaft ist wichtiger als Protokoll“: Charles de Gaulle begrüßt Konrad Adenauer (27. September 1963)', *German History in Documents and Images* <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2360&language=german> [accessed 10 November 2019]

²⁴ Kaelble, p. 3.

²⁵ Georg Walther Heyer, *Das Deutsche-Französische Jugendwerk: Ziele, Möglichkeiten, Erfahrungen; Chancen Zur Freundschaft* (Freudenstadt: Eurobuch-Verlag August Lutzeyer, 1969) p. 9.

²⁶ Text of the Elysee Treaty <<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/text-of-the-elysee-treaty-joint-declaration-of-francogerman-friendship/>> [accessed 5 October 2019]

outlines how more of an emphasis will be placed on offering opportunities to young people, to help them establish bilateral ties with their peers. To facilitate this, an autonomous council will be set up with its own joint fund, aiming to promote exchanges between pupils, students, young artists and workers.

Defrance argues that the reasoning behind selecting the area of ‘education and youth’ as a focus was that ‘the governments retained the domain for which the record was least satisfactory (education) and, on the other, the domain that was the most promising for the future of bilateral cooperation (youth).’²⁷ The arrangements for the youth section were very quickly realised. On the 5 July 1963, the foreign ministers for each country, Maurice Couve de Murville and Gerhard Schröder, signed the agreement for the creation of the Franco-German Youth Office. The FGYO came into being in the autumn of 1963, under the titles *Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse (OFAJ)/Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk (DFJW)*.²⁸ This was a remarkable achievement, given that there was hardly any detailed framework in place in the Élysée Treaty alone. In the years since, this manifestation of the cultural element of the treaty has been commended. By all accounts, the sections on Foreign Affairs and Defence were expected to be prioritised at the time. Antoine Vion looks beyond the tangible outcomes of the treaty and highlights that it also ‘elevated Franco-German dialogue to the highest point of historical reflexivity’.²⁹

When the Franco-German Youth Office was formally agreed in July 1963, there was a revision of its original definition, as described in the Élysée Treaty. The office now had the formal role of maintaining links which united the young people in the two countries, the aim being to reinforce mutual understanding between them, and to encourage and hold youth meetings and exchanges.³⁰ This new brief was taken seriously by the council now in charge of the office. Soon they were inundated with requests for their own services, or for access to their funds. Yet, Henri Ménudier writes that just because it was a new organisation, it did not mean that the FGYO had a monopoly on the matter of exchanges in the 1960s.³¹ As will be shown in the following chapter, the office

²⁷ Corine Defrance, ‘The Élysée Treaty in the Context of Franco-German Socio-Cultural Relations’, p. 74.

²⁸ Abkommen über die Errichtung des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-73*, (Bad Honnef, Paris: DFJW/OFAJ, 1973), p. 100.

²⁹ Antoine Vion, ‘Franco-German Friendship: A Dynamic Perspective’, in *Friendship and International Relations*, ed. by Simon Koschut and Andrea Oelsner (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 109–22 (p. 114).

³⁰ Abkommen über die Errichtung des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-73*, p. 101.

³¹ Henri Ménudier, *L'Office franco-allemand pour la jeunesse* (Paris: A. Colin, 1988) p. 55.

had a novel role as a formal institution dedicated to organising exchanges for young French and Germans, in addition to developing a variety of new activities to offer. However, some of its most important work would involve facilitating existing programmes in order to align their outcomes with the idea of cooperation set out in the Élysée Treaty.

Chapter 2: How did the Franco-German Youth Office promote transnational relations between young French and Germans?

The Franco-German Youth office has often been dubbed ‘le plus bel enfant du traité de l’Élysée’ since its foundation in 1963.³² Yet where is the evidence for this title? This chapter will focus on the first two decades of office, and will outline how it developed new opportunities for transnational encounters and collaborated with existing exchange organisations. To fully understand the breadth of the FGYO’s work, we must look at the original goals given at the time of its creation, and then at the steps taken in order to meet these goals. Additionally, we must consider the context of the FGYO’s developments. In the 1960s and 1970s, we can see an ongoing collaborative attitude with regard to young people across Europe.

It is against this background of Europeanisation that the FGYO sought to continue fostering a distinctly Franco-German friendship, and operate without influence from the explicit political agendas of each country’s administration. Dr. Bruno Heck, the Minister of Family Affairs and Youth in the FRG from 1962 to 1968, gave an interview in the year after the office came into being. In this, he stated clearly that the FGYO ‘hat es nicht mit der Lösung aktueller politischer Probleme zu tun; dem Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerk ist eine Aufgabe auf lange Frist gestellt.’³³ Instead, the purpose of the office was ‘die heranwachsende Generation so zusammenwachsen zu lassen, daß die deutsch-französische Freundschaft politischen Belastungen gegenüber stabil bleibt.’³⁴

In any case, the main goal of the office was to ensure that young French and Germans from a variety of backgrounds were given the chance to take part in cross-border movement. Within this, the office included young people under the age of thirty as its main target demographic.³⁵ These participants had a variety of societal backgrounds – a more inclusive range than the pre-existing academic exchange programmes, which had

³² Eva Sabine Kuntz and Max Claudet, ‘«Le plus bel enfant du traité de l’Élysée» – toujours à l’avant-garde, toujours talentueux, toujours rebelle’ in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 439-49 (p. 439).

³³ Bruno Heck, ‘Der Stand des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks’, *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung* Nr. 7, 14 January 1965, p. 49.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁵ Hans Manfred Bock, ‘Complication des relations politiques et consolidation de l’OFAJ au cours des années 1960’ in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 59-87 (p. 71).

funded only those from the middle classes.³⁶ Article two of the founding agreement for the FGYO highlights the main types of activities that the office sought to cover:

- a) Begegnung und Austausch von Schülern, Studenten und berufstätigen Jugendlichen;
- b) Gruppenfahrten, Jugend- und Jugendsportveranstaltungen ;
- c) Kinder-, Jugend- und Familienerholung
- d) Austausch und Ausbildung von Fachkräften und Mitarbeitern der Jugendarbeit und des Jugendsports, gemeinsames Training für Jugendsportler;
- e) Vertiefung der gegenseitigen Kenntnisse der beiden Länder durch Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Bildungsreisen, Studienaufenthalte, Seminare, musische Veranstaltungen und durch Tagungen der leitenden Persönlichkeiten der Jugendarbeit;
- f) Ausbau außerschulischer Einrichtungen zur Förderung der gegenseitigen Sprachkenntnisse;
- g) Untersuchungen und wissenschaftliche Forschungsarbeiten über Jugendfragen.³⁷

Interestingly, the text goes on to say that, in undertaking this work, the office aims to pursue the principles of cooperation and understanding that are seen in other European countries.³⁸ In this sense, what the FGYO set out to do was not unique, but the extent of its activity would end up being quite significant.

Moreover, the FGYO team did not lead many of the exchanges that the organisation financed. A large number of partner organisations planned and carried out these Franco-German programmes. It is important to note here that many of these organisations had representatives who sat on the administrative councils for the FGYO (with one located in Paris and the other in Bad Honnef, near Bonn). Therefore, they had a direct hand in the authorising of programmes and funding. Article six of the founding agreement outlines that on each of these councils there would be six non-governmental figures from each country, and a further four persons representing the respective governments.³⁹ François Altmayer reflects on

³⁶ Lily Gardner Feldman, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), p. 97.

³⁷ Abkommen über die Errichtung des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-73*, (Bad Honnef, Paris: DFJW/OFAJ, 1973), p. 101.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

this civilian participation being ‘very remarkable’ when we think of the direct governmental funds that the FGYO controlled.⁴⁰

A full analysis of each of the activity sectors outlined above is not within the limits of this work. Instead, this chapter will give a brief overview of the support from the FGYO in the areas relating to school exchanges, extra-curricular activities, university exchanges, and work placements.

2.1 School Exchanges

These programmes were a key focus for the FGYO in the initial years, because they were an efficient way to organise and promote exchanges on a large scale. They had indeed existed before 1963, but the financial support from the office meant that there was a motivation for teachers and parents to get involved. Certainly, there had already been a small number of school exchanges through reconciliatory town partnerships in the 1950s, but they had not always engaged large numbers of pupils efficiently. Understandably, in this early stage there had been some reluctance from parents to send their offspring to the partner country. For example, in 1954 one school rector in Betzdorf (Westerwald) reported that French parents were reluctant to send their children to the FRG because of events during the war.⁴¹

Regardless of any sense of hereditary enmity, there was definitely a need for external reinforcement to make these programmes viable. This is where the FGYO was able to offer support, as it facilitated the growth of networks between teachers and parents. It is difficult to know how many schools actually benefitted from funds from the office, as figures were not coherently recorded until the 1980s.⁴² Part of the office’s involvement saw an emphasis on language acquisition in the framework of these exchanges. This resulted in a collaborative effort from French and German teachers to design teaching aids that would include linguistic *and* cultural elements as a focus of these exchanges.⁴³ Writing in 1969, Georg Walter Heyer found that, on average, these encounters lasted two

⁴⁰ Altmayer, p. 27.

⁴¹ Christian Sebecke, ‘Wir müssen Brücken bauen von Mensch zu Mensch’ : die Partnerschaft Rheinland-Pfalz - Burgund als regionales Annäherungsmodell (1953-1969)‘ in *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945: zivilgesellschaftliche Annäherungen*, ed. by Corine Defrance, Michael Kissener, and Pia Nordblom (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2010), pp. 311-326 (p. 320).

⁴² Caroline Doublier, ‘L’OFAJ et les échanges scolaires’ in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 367-87 (p. 368).

⁴³ Jean-Marie Zemb, ‘Die Ziele des Jugendwerks’, *Échanges : Zeitschrift des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks. Revue de l’Office Franco-Allemand pour la Jeunesse*, 1 (1970), 47-50, (p. 48).

to three weeks, took place in July or August and had more male participants than female, usually around 18 years old.⁴⁴

The office commissioned Dieter Tiemann to undertake studies to reveal any preconceptions that young pupils held about their neighbouring country. This fell under article two of the FGYO founding agreement – the endeavour to undertake research on youth issues.⁴⁵ This was most certainly completed with the aim of showing that although a school curriculum with a focus on bilateral history and language tuition was helpful, physical exchanges were most beneficial for young people.

In 1978, over 11,000 pupils across France were asked to write down what they thought of when they heard the word ‘Allemagne’.⁴⁶ Answers varied from ‘Je sais tout d’abord que L’Allemagne est un pays européen’ (Girl, 13, Paris) to ‘Allemands = touristes. Ils sont partout’ (Girl, 16, Nice) to ‘L’Allemagne, c’est le Goethe et le nazisme’ (Boy, 19, Reims).⁴⁷ The study also asked pupils how they informed themselves about Germany. Most answered that they gathered their impressions from films, radio, or from school lessons.⁴⁸

The same type of study was conducted in the FRG the following year, asking the pupils what they thought of when they heard the word ‘Frankreich’.⁴⁹ Answers in this study ranged from ‘En France, on n’aime pas les Allemands’ (Boy, 19, Hamburg) to ‘La première idée qui me vient à propos de la France, c’est qu’elle fait partie de la CEE (Communauté économique européenne)’ (Boy, 14, Rheinland-Palatinate) to ‘Les Français aiment manger et aimer’ (Girl, 17, Berlin).⁵⁰ The majority of the responses from young Germans said that they got their information about France from television adverts for products or from school lessons.⁵¹

While these selected responses depict a real need for the work of the FGYO to offer understanding beyond stereotypes, the studies themselves are of limited use. Tiemann did not conduct any follow-up surveys after the participants had been involved in exchanges, to show a deeper understanding of, or positive attitude towards, the partner

⁴⁴ Heyer, p. 42

⁴⁵ As before, Article II, F., p. 101.

⁴⁶ Dieter, Tiemann, *Ce que je sais sur l’Allemagne: L’image que des élèves français se font de leur voisin d’outre-Rhin* (Bad Honnef, Paris: DFJW/OFAJ, 1979), p. i.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2, p. 6, p. 7 respectively.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124-5.

⁴⁹ Dieter Tiemann, *Ce que je sais de la France: L’image que des élèves allemands se font de leur voisin d’outre-Rhin* (Bad Honnef, Paris: DFJW/OFAJ, 1980), p. i.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3, p. 4, p. 7 respectively.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122-3.

country. However, it does offer us a glimpse into young people's awareness of the idea of a Franco-German friendship in the early years of the FGYO, and makes clear the fact that school exchanges were possible opportunities to shift preconceptions of the partner country.

2.2 Extra-curricular Activities

The youth office also made use of existing non-educational organisations. These included town partnership committees, youth associations, cultural forums and sports federations.⁵² Particularly after 1965, the office had no choice but to join forces with these bodies as it found it could not sustain its initial level of fully funded programmes.⁵³ Instead, it began to offer significant subsidies for sporting competitions, musical events, as well as summer camps. Among these subsidies a specific set of funds was set aside for the work of town partnerships, which made up a large part of the activity supported by the office.⁵⁴ Ansbert Baumann argues that this collaboration with existing structures was what led to a number of successful exchanges, rather than exceptional work created by the office itself.⁵⁵

There are several studies on town partnerships, but it remains difficult to find primary testimonies detailing cross-border encounters in which the FGYO was involved.⁵⁶ One case where we can see the support from the office is in the youth sports tournaments held by the town partnership between Ludwigsburg and Montbéliard. For example, in June 1964 they held competitions for indoor handball, football, judo, fencing, shooting and chess. The first rounds took place in Montbéliard and the later rounds in Ludwigsburg. The FGYO subsidised this exchange-style tournament.⁵⁷ Other sporting tournaments or training courses were held through the *Comité national olympique et sportif français (CNOSF)* and the *Deutsch Sportjugend (DSJ)*.⁵⁸

⁵² *L'Office Franco-Allemand Pour La Jeunesse a 50 Ans*, ed. by Corine Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil, (Paris, Berlin: OFAJ/DFJW, 2013), p. 40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁵⁴ Corine Defrance, 'Les jumelages franco-allemands. Aspect d'une coopération transnationale', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 99 (2008), 189–201, (p. 197).

⁵⁵ Ansbert Baumann, 'Éducation et Jeunesse : «Reserver les liens et approfondir la compréhension mutuelle...» ?' in *Le Traité de l'Élysée et les relations franco-allemands 1945 – 1963 – 2003*, ed. by Corine Defrance and Ulrich Pfeil (Paris : CNRS Ed., 2005), pp. 131-52 (p. 146).

⁵⁶ Defrance, 'Les jumelages franco-allemands. Aspect d'une coopération transnationale', p. 189.

⁵⁷ 'Auszug aus der Niederschrift der Sitzung des Sportausschusses vom 15. April 1964. Städtevergleichswettkampf Ludwigsburg/Montbéliard im Rahmen des Deutsch-Französischen Jugendwerks', *Stadtsarchiv Ludwigsburg*, 15 April 1964, <<https://ludwigsburg-montbeliard.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/526/file/130031507279.pdf>> [accessed 12 February 2020].

⁵⁸ André Koch, 'Le sport, terrain d'apprentissage interculturel. L'OFAJ et les programmes de rencontres franco-allemands' in *Les jeunes dans les relations*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 307-27 (p. 307).

Additionally, the office supported meetings of choirs and folk groups which often had pre-existing links, and music was also a feature in certain summer camps. However, the majority of camps were more practical in nature, either involving physical activity or language acquisition courses, but did offer young people a chance to socialise and find common interests. The original impetus of the FGYO was always present within these spaces; the idea of ‘friendship’ was clearly highlighted. One example of this public show could be seen at a youth camp at Fort-de-Malmaison in October 1964, where a large banner reads ‘Nous voulons travailler ensemble et rester en paix’.⁵⁹ Yet, without analysis of personal reviews of these encounters, it is hard to know how many young people viewed these transnational meetings as acts of reconciliation between the two partner countries, or simply as an experience personal to them.

Antoine Vion argues that it was important to build on these cultural works in civilian life, incorporating positive Franco-German relations into popular culture.⁶⁰ The FGYO even commissioned François Reichenbach to make films in both French and German showcasing the work of the office. The resulting products, *Deux pays, une jeunesse / Zwei Länder, eine Jugend* (1978) were broadcast through state media.⁶¹ These civilian encounters that took place outside schools, universities and workplaces helped to create a positive image of Franco-German relations.

2.3 University Exchanges

Many of the initial academic exchanges took place in cooperation with town partnerships, or even prompted new ones to be created. This was the case for links made between Mainz and Dijon, Heidelberg and Montpellier, Tübingen and Aix-en-Provence, and Marburg and Poitiers.⁶² Otherwise, links were formed through the personal connections of individual professors or assistants.⁶³ The FGYO continued its role of building on these existing connections through financial support. It also created a more equal level of

⁵⁹ ‘Deutsch und französische Jugendliche (1964)’, *German History in Documents and Images*, <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2464&language=german> [accessed 10 March 2020]

⁶⁰ Vion, ‘Franco-German Friendship: A Dynamic Perspective’ in *Friendship and International Relations*, ed. by Koschut and Oelsner, pp. 109–22 (p. 114).

⁶¹ Ménudier, p.129.

⁶² Corine Defrance, ‘Les jumelages franco-allemands. Aspect d’une coopération transnationale’, p. 197.

⁶³ DFJW, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-1968* (Bad Honnef, Paris : DFJW/OFAJ, 1969), p. 78.

exchanges - at the time of the office's foundation in 1963, far more Germans were studying in France than the number of French students in the FRG.⁶⁴

Yet this involvement in exchanges within higher educational institutions was not without criticism. Many thought that the office would be supporting an 'elitist' form of exchange between academics.⁶⁵ In reality, the office was attempting to facilitate more opportunities for wider student participation. It is difficult to say how many programmes the office did subsidise in total, as the budget for this sector was combined with school exchanges. Nevertheless, investment did gradually increase in this area, moving from 10.07% of the FGYO total budget in 1965 to 15.36% in 1971.⁶⁶ These funds financed three types of grants available to students: those for long-term support, those within the framework of a town partnership, and those for studies at the Universität des Saarlandes, where courses were taught in both French and German.⁶⁷

The exchanges that stemmed from this financial support primarily involved humanities students, especially those on language courses, and were usually carried out in cooperation with the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)*.⁶⁸ Yet, the FGYO also supported young medics in securing foreign clinical placements, in addition to law students undertaking internships in the partner country. One example of this is the opportunity for young German jurists to undertake subsidised placements at the prestigious l'École nationale d'administration (ENA) until 1975.⁶⁹

In looking at movement between universities in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1968 student unrest cannot be ignored. The FGYO was directly affected when both administrations in Paris and Bonn had to cancel or rearrange a number of programmes. The Paris office was even occupied by a group of protesters for two days on the 29 and 30 May 1968.⁷⁰ Additionally, several young Germans were sent home at the start of June 1968 which caused some negative press in the FRG media, but this quickly calmed down.⁷¹ There was certainly no lasting adverse effect on the number of young people

⁶⁴ Corine Defrance, 'Les échanges universitaires dans le programme d'activités de l'OFAJ' in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 389-410 (p. 390).

⁶⁵ Defrance and Pfeil, *L'Office Franco-Allemand Pour La Jeunesse a 50 Ans*, p. 42.

⁶⁶ Defrance, 'Les échanges universitaires dans le programme d'activités de l'OFAJ' in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 389-410 (p. 392).

⁶⁷ Ménudier, p. 138.

⁶⁸ Defrance, 'Les échanges universitaires dans le programme d'activités de l'OFAJ' in *Les jeunes dans les relations*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 389-410 (p. 395).

⁶⁹ DFJW/OFAJ, 'L'OFAJ en 1975' (Bad Honnef, Paris: DFJW/OFAJ, 1976), p. 24.

⁷⁰ Bock, 'Complication des relations politiques et consolidation de l'OFAJ au cours des années 1960' in *Les jeunes dans les relations*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 59-87 (p.71).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

choosing to study in the neighbouring country, as the years after 1968 saw a gradual increase in the numbers of French and German students crossing the border for university places.⁷² Of course, it is hard to say how many of them did so with the motivation and support from the FGYO.

Corine Defrance acknowledges the outcome of this period as giving students a drive for mobility, but also as a reason for politicians to continue support for Franco-German bilateral relations against the wider context of Europe-wide cooperation.⁷³ Unfortunately, the 1970s saw a series of budget cuts. This resulted in the FGYO scaling down the number of subsidies it offered, instead leaving other organisations to support transnational student mobility. This would continue in later decades with the likes of the Erasmus programme playing a major role in student exchanges.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the initial resolution in the Élysée Treaty to overcome the specific Franco-German problem of equivalences in academic diplomas was not fully resolved.⁷⁵ This resulted in low levels of movement, with the situation only improving in the 1980s.⁷⁶

2.4 Professional Exchanges

The first activity of a professional nature supported by the FGYO took the form of holiday work programmes.⁷⁷ However, particularly by the 1970s, the economic situation in both France and the FRG was in decline and this affected the nature of the transnational encounters that the office supported. The FGYO itself had experienced financial difficulties in the early 1970s, but managed to survive this with a reorganisation of the office and a new priority: a drive for professional exchanges.⁷⁸ The goal of these exchanges was not to secure long-term employment for young people, but rather for them to achieve ‘une pleine efficacité humaine, linguistique et professionnelle.’⁷⁹ A crucial part

⁷² Robert Picht, *Deutsch-französischer Hochschulaustausch: Stand und Perspektiven. Aktuelle Frankreich Analysen Nummer 11*, ed. by DFI (Ludwigsburg: Deutsch-Französisches Institut, 1998), p. 4.

⁷³ Defrance, ‘Les échanges universitaires dans le programme d’activités de l’OFAJ’ in *Les jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 389-410 (p. 398).

⁷⁴ François Beilecke, ‘Continuité, renouveau et impératif européen : l’OFAJ dans les années 1980’ in *Les Jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 117-47 (p. 141).

⁷⁵ Text of the Elysee Treaty, under Section C, Article I, B - ‘The Problem of Equivalences’, <<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/text-of-the-elysee-treaty-joint-declaration-of-francogerman-friendship/>> [accessed 5 October 2019].

⁷⁶ Defrance and Pfeil, *L’Office Franco-Allemand Pour La Jeunesse a 50 Ans*, p. 43.

⁷⁷ Anne-Marie Gervais, ‘L’OFAJ et les jeunes professionnels’ in *Les Jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 269-91 (p. 269).

⁷⁸ Mark Webster, ‘The war is over, but the images linger on’, *Times Educational Supplement*, 8 July 1977, p. 9.

⁷⁹ DFJW, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-1973*, p. 57.

of this was to develop programmes for financially, socially or ‘culturally deprived’ young people – those who had been significantly disadvantaged by mass youth unemployment.⁸⁰

These exchanges took two main forms: those organised by professional associations and institutions, and those organised by partner groups, which would allow participants to gain professional skills or knowledge.⁸¹ In organising and financing these programmes the office managed to create a network that had not existed before. This, however, meant setting up apprenticeships that did not necessarily require an exchange element.⁸² In any case, this new work allowed the office to draw the interest of young people in both countries. By the late 1970s, 60% of young people over 16 participating in the FGYO programmes were young professionals and apprentices.⁸³ This reflects the shift in the main concerns of the office, that is, putting the needs of young people first, but still ultimately retaining a hold of Franco-German cooperation.

At this point it is interesting to note that the office gave significant support to young professional artists, and particularly in the 1970s there was a real development in artistic programmes. This did bring the office criticism from some of its partners, who saw this as backing ‘elitist culture’.⁸⁴ Yet it could be argued that this funding was needed, as in both countries there had been little formal support for this profession beforehand. A key example of the office’s work is the promotion of visual artists, and the 1975 launch of the ‘Foto-Film-Video’ campaign and symposium.⁸⁵

In summation, the work of the FGYO dynamised pre-existing projects as well as offering new links and long-standing formalised programmes. Already by the mid 1960s, 250,000 young people had participated in programmes subsidised by the office.⁸⁶ This number rose to over a million young people by 1967 (573,623 German and 506,917 French) and a total number of over 28,151 encounters.⁸⁷ The office reached these numbers by opening up new avenues of interaction to young people that were not just academic in nature. In

⁸⁰ Dominique Bosquelle, ‘L’OFAJ et les «Jeunes défavorisés»’ in *Les Jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 293-306 (p. 293).

⁸¹ DFJW, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-1968* (Bad Honnef, Paris : DFJW/OFAJ, 1969), p. 53.

⁸² Anne-Marie Gervais, ‘L’OFAJ et les jeunes professionnels’ in *Les Jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 269-91 (p. 273).

⁸³ Defrance and Pfeil, *L’Office Franco-Allemand Pour La Jeunesse a 50 Ans*, p. 52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸⁵ Anne-Kathrin Auel, ‘La promotion par L’OFAJ de la coopération entre jeunes artistes et étudiants en art’ in *Les Jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 329-346 (p. 330).

⁸⁶ Defrance and Pfeil, *L’Office Franco-Allemand Pour La Jeunesse a 50 Ans*, p. 40

⁸⁷ DFJW, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1963-1968*, p. 10 and p. 23 respectively.

doing this, the office managed to make the notion of positive transnational relations a tangible reality for a new demographic. As Andreas Wirsching puts it: ‘Diese Annäherung zwischen den Bevölkerungen, die am Ende auch die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen unabhängig machen sollte von großen Individuen wie de Gaulle und Adenauer, muss man als eine Erfolgsgeschichte bezeichnen.’⁸⁸

The work of the office was also praised by politicians and viewed as a source of inspiration for fostering other transnational youth relations later. For example, it was seen as a model for the creation of *l’Office franco-québécois pour la jeunesse*, formed in 1968.⁸⁹ Later, Germany and Poland also created a youth organisation in the 1990s, with Helmut Kohl and Tadeusz Mazowiecki directly referring to the Franco-German equivalent.⁹⁰

However, these other organisations each had their own political heritage, and the evolution of the FGYO must be seen on its own terms. These terms include building on all the reconciliatory work done by organisations such as the *Deutsch-Französisches Institut*, *Bureau International de Liaison et de Documentation* and *Comité français d’Échanges avec l’Allemagne nouvelle*. Additionally, the facilitation of new exchange opportunities through town partnerships cannot be overlooked. Bock argues that these older networks were required to build a successful transnational agency as they were the ‘stabilisers’ of individual engagement and produced long-lasting forms of interaction, some of which had already been active across generations.⁹¹ Overall, the work of the office managed to continue the optimistic approach towards Franco-German relations that politicians had hoped for in the early 1960s. Certainly, the FGYO touched the lives of many young French and Germans. But was this impact merely transitory?

⁸⁸ Hélène Miard-Delacroix and Andreas Wirsching, *Von Erbfeinden zu guten Nachbarn: ein deutsch-französischer Dialog*, (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2019), p. 132.

⁸⁹ Stéphane Paquin, *Les relations internationales du Québec depuis la doctrine Gérin-Lajoie (1965-2005): le prolongement externe des compétences internes* (Presses Université Laval, 2006), p. 209.

⁹⁰ Miard-Delacroix, p. 330.

⁹¹ Hans Manfred Bock, ‘Transnationalisierung als zeitdiagnostisches Kennwort und Zeitgeschichtliches Konzept für die deutsch-französischen Beziehung nach 1945’ in *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945*, ed. by Corine Defrance, Michael Kissener, and Pia Nordblom, pp. 349-377 (p. 369).

Chapter 3: Did the work of the Franco-German Youth Office motivate former participants to continue transnational cooperation?

Georg Walther Heyer raised important questions about the outcomes of the FGYO exchange programmes in his early study published six years after the foundation of the office. He asked, could the high volume of exchange programmes really lead to the formation of successful friendships and positive impressions on a personal level, or did the work of the office simply constitute as mass tourism?⁹² He certainly had a basis to raise questions, as in the early years particularly, it seemed that certain young people had purely recreational motives to take part in exchanges. The FGYO's goal of hands-on cultural learning was not a priority for them. As one opinion survey from 1964 summarised: 'die Bildungsreise zum Kennenlernen von Land, Leuten und Kultur rangiert ganz weit hinten.'⁹³ Despite these original motivations, there is evidence to suggest that the FGYO exchanges did cause a deeper understanding of the partner country and bring about motivation to take part in further cross-border movement. This chapter will explain why an analysis of the individual actors in transnational relations is important, and will then offer a brief selection of testimonies from FGYO publications. The first of these publications is the fifteenth anniversary work on the office, *15 Jahre Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk 1963 -1978*. It includes interviews with participants who mainly took part in work placements, reflecting the emphasis on professional development that the FGYO began to promote in the 1970s.

Other accounts come from a later publication, *40 Histoires Franco-Allemandes*, created at the time of the forty-year anniversary of the office. This document offers reflections from a variety of adults, not all of whom actually took part in FGYO programmes. Some of the testimonies even refer back to events from the Second World War. The office collected these stories via an open call, « Racontez-nous votre histoire franco-allemand ». This competition of sorts received over seven hundred entries, of which forty were selected by a jury.

Clearly, the nature of these accounts is not ideal for drawing conclusions. In order to access unedited sources that are free from institutional bias, a long-term study is required to construct a picture of how the FGYO directly shaped the personal lives of

⁹² Heyer, p. 18.

⁹³ Heinz Linnerz, 'Eine Umfrage zum Jugendaustausch', *Zeitschrift für den deutsch-französischen Dialog*, 20 (1964), 176-9 (p. 178).

former participants. For now, however, they offer a glimpse into the lived experiences of those involved exchanges.

Defrance highlights that already in the first town twinnings, individuals were important actors in Franco-German transnational relations, alongside governments.⁹⁴ This could also be said for those involved in orchestrating and taking part in youth exchanges, as the FGYO acted as a bridge between public policy and the private interactions between young citizens. The main channel of support from the office was subsidies to independent partner organisations. Therefore, it is likely that many young people were not even aware that the FGYO helped their encounters to come into being. This did however help to solidify a positive image of Franco-German relations based on tangible experiences that felt separate from the influence of political discourse. These experiences could then translate into an implicit appreciation of transnational foreign politics.

Ulrich Krotz defines this phenomenon as a ‘parapublic practice’ that ‘underpins relations among specific states and constructs social purpose in the international sphere.’⁹⁵ In other words, organisations like the FGYO are intermediary bodies that put state policy into practice on a societal level. These ‘parapublic underpinnings’ have three effects: they provide the means for joint activities; they build networks of participants who have the capability to then go on and work in the sphere of public and private international affairs; and, lastly, they create and preserve ‘social meaning’ by shaping beliefs and political understanding, helping to form an ‘international collective identity’.⁹⁶ We have already seen a snapshot of the activities which the office helped to create. Now we shall look at the movement of individuals as a result of this work.

In a study for the DFI in 1999, Robert Picht lists former FGYO programme participants as one of the main groups of individuals likely to go on and study in the partner country. This is because, in his opinion, they often had a higher motivation to deepen Franco-German contacts.⁹⁷ This reflects the precise aims of the FGYO – to foster relations at a young age in order to create motivation for further cooperation. Ménudier also suggests

⁹⁴ Corine Defrance, ‘Les jumelages franco-allemands. Aspect d’une coopération transnationale’, *Vingtème Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 99 (2008), 189–201, (p. 190).

⁹⁵ Ulrich Krotz, ‘Parapublic Underpinnings of International Relations: The Franco-German Construction of Europeanization of a Particular Kind’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 13 (2007), 385–417 (p. 386).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 386–7.

⁹⁷ Picht, p. 5.

that students who were involved in bilateral movement in the course of their studies often resulted in continuing their involvement in Franco-German meetings by organising further types of exchanges and courses or by becoming involved in town-twinning arrangements.⁹⁸

One testimony that follows a trajectory like the above is that of Wolfgang O. Hugo, who had been part of a school exchange to Paris in 1972.⁹⁹ Two years later, after sitting his high-school exams, he travelled to Caen to take part in a language course through the partnership with his town of Würzburg. He described getting to know other students through this visit, and meeting war veterans. He later returned to France as a student at the University of Rennes, then as a guide, as a tourist and later as a member of the Würzburg twinning committee.

For Christian Desbois, his encounter as a teenager also had a hand in him later taking an active role in continuing Franco-German activity.¹⁰⁰ He even described himself as ‘un enfant de l'OFAJ’. When he was sixteen, he and his younger brother had the chance to go to a youth camp in West Berlin. It was due to the financial assistance from the FGYO that Desbois’ parents were able to send them both. In August 1966 they arrived in Tegel, taking part in various sporting activities as well as cultural outings, even visiting East Berlin for the day. As an adult, he sat on two town partnership committees and returned to Berlin with his children after having such positive experiences there.

For other participants, a better cultural understanding of their neighbours across the Rhein can also be seen. One nineteen-year-old trainee in radio and television technology, Werner Hallmeier, travelled from the Handwerkskammer in Augsburg to Le Mans in the 1970s. He took part in a special programme for young apprentices (*Lehrlingsbegegnungen*).¹⁰¹ Whilst there, he not only developed his knowledge of his trade, but also took part in leisure activities and sightseeing programmes, or as he put it: ‘O mei, man lernt eben Land und Leute kennen.’¹⁰² He spoke of the negative French attitudes – ‘gerade in puncto Haß’ – that he had expected before he went, but that he never

⁹⁸ Ménudier, p. 139.

⁹⁹ Wolfgang O. Hugo, ‘Premier séjour a caen et ce qui s’ensuivit’ in *40 Histoires Franco-Allemandes* (Paris, Berlin : OFAJ/DFJW, 2004), pp. 133-36.

¹⁰⁰ Christian Desbois, ‘La pièce de 5 DM est-allemands’ in *40 Histoires Franco-Allemandes* (Paris, Berlin: OFAJ/DFJW, 2004), pp. 117-18.

¹⁰¹ DFJW, 15 Jahre Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk 1963 -1978, (Bad Honnef: DFJW, 1978), p. 38.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

encountered while he was there.¹⁰³ He described his experience as ‘einer der schönsten Urlaube und trotzdem nicht Urlaub’.¹⁰⁴ From this, he said he would definitely wish to return to France (despite the fact that he still did not speak French) and that he thought exchanges like this were politically important as they offered the chance to have a different impression of France.¹⁰⁵

Fritz Reidenbach was another teenager impressed by the warmth of his French neighbours.¹⁰⁶ He had grown up near to the French border in the district of Bad Kreuznach in the Rhineland-Palatinate, so already had a certain level of understanding of the country. His father had fought in the war, and although he had shared positive feelings about France with his son, Reidenbach described his parents’ generation as being notably distrusting of building friendship with the French. In 1967 he took part in his first trip abroad, organised by the Mainz Landesjugendring to its twin city of Dijon. He wrote of feeling at ease even though he did not understand French very well, and remembered being impressed at the sight of motorbikes and fancy cars. He reflected that this stay made an impression on him for life. He said he had rid himself of any prejudices and the pre-instilled tendency to be ‘anti-French’. This resulted in him holidaying in the country later in life and describing feeling at home there.

Participants were sometimes older than the initial target demographic of the FGYO. Hanns-Otto Engstfeld, a thirty-three-year-old editor for *Mittagsmagazin* on the Westdeutschen Rundfunk radio network, took part in a trip to France.¹⁰⁷ When asked if it had an effect on his views, values or behaviour, he replied that he had a better understanding of the culture, going as far as to say that he would prefer to live in France ‘weil es da eine Form von latenter Anarchie gibt, die bei uns undenkbar ist.’¹⁰⁸ This in itself shows a personal appraisal of cultural differences between the two countries. Arguably, these subjective realisations are valuable to wider Franco-German relations as they added a human level to the prescribed political narratives which were found in history textbooks.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-4.

¹⁰⁶ Fritz Reidenbach, ‘Dieu en France ou le pays de cocagne’ in *40 Histoires Franco-Allemandes* (Paris, Berlin : OFAJ/DFJW, 2004), pp. 123-25.

¹⁰⁷ DFJW, *15 Jahre Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk 1963 -1978*, (Bad Honnef: DFJW, 1978), p. 64.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

¹⁰⁹ Pfügler, ‘The Élysée Treaty of 1963: the foundational myth of Franco-German friendship?’ in *Myths in German-Language Textbooks* ed. by Roland Bernhard and others, pp. 287-306 (p. 292).

Sometimes bilateral relationships even progressed to the most personal levels. Peter Seideneck was an advisor on the federal board of the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* and beforehand a speaker for the FGYO in the *Gewerkschaftsjugend*.¹¹⁰ When interviewed, he was asked if the exchange in which he took part had affected his life path or world of thought. He explained that he would agree it had, as he met his wife during his time in France in 1966. Additionally, he said he thought that his relationship to France had had a definite political influence on himself and his career.¹¹¹

Another encounter which led to marriage was that of Monique Vater.¹¹² Having started to learn German, she decided that she wanted to know more about the country. The FGYO heavily subsidised a ten-day trip to Berlin for her in 1965. She wrote that while staying in the Grunewald district near the university, she met a family by happenstance, who then invited her to go back to Berlin for a longer visit. She remained in contact with the family – a connection that has since lasted three generations. She later returned to Germany to work as an au pair. It was during this time that she met her husband, a local Berliner. After moving to Düsseldorf, she settled in a village near Kassel. She described being part of the ‘cercle d'amitié franco-allemand’ there, and they even have their own town partnership with a French village.

We can see, even with these few edited testimonies, that the FGYO has left an impression on those who have benefitted from its work. Although some participants were clearly less proactive in ensuring that they improved their language skills, many reported a social awareness that they had not had before. This in itself has to be considered a positive outcome of these exchanges, despite not always resulting in lasting cross-border movement. To revisit Heyer’s study on the FGYO that was mentioned at the start of this chapter, the scholar went on to give his personal judgement on exchanges and the experiences that they created. He held the opinion that ‘keine andere Kontaktform hat so viele dauerhafte Verbindungen entstehen lassen und so viele weitergehende Initiativen geweckt.’¹¹³ This can certainly be noted by the enthusiasm from certain participants to engender cross-cultural contact in later years. In particular, through working with other

¹¹⁰ DFJW, 15 Jahre Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk 1963 -1978, (Bad Honnef: DFJW, 1978), p. 87.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹¹² Monique Vater, ‘Collage de mes souvenirs’ in *40 Histoires Franco-Allemandes* (Paris, Berlin: OFAJ/DFJW, 2004), pp. 71-4.

¹¹³ Heyer, p. 46.

non-governmental organisations in order to facilitate further movement for new generations.

Bock highlights that in current research there have been questions raised about the possibility of exploring these transnational societal relationships at an individual level, rather than focusing on institutional connections. This remains difficult to construct thoroughly as qualitative data is not readily available. However, he argues that we can assume that the pursuit of education, profit and security are the most common motivations for transnational civil mobility.¹¹⁴ Within its exchanges, the FGYO promoted a need to understand cultural similarities and differences between young people in the FRG and France too. It is fair to say that this drive did not always filter down to an individual level and join the factors that Bock outlines as motivations to take part in transnational encounters. However, there is definitely evidence to suggest that once young people took part in bilateral exchanges, a number of them found a new interest in the cultural dimension of bilateral relations that prompted continuing cross-border movement. As Jöckel writes, all of this Franco-German cultural activity led to cooperation and a sense of reconciliation that was not limited to political elites, but instead ‘weit in die Zivilgesellschaft hineinwirkte.’¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Bock, 'Transnationalisierung als zeitdiagnostisches Kennwort und Zeitgeschichtliches Konzept für die deutsch-französischen Beziehung nach 1945' in *Wege der Verständigung zwischen Deutschen und Franzosen nach 1945*, ed. by Corine Defrance, Michael Kissener, and Pia Nordblom , pp. 349-377 (p. 368).

¹¹⁵ Jöckel, p. 14.

Conclusion

The Franco-German Youth Office certainly took the notion of friendship as outlined in the 1963 Élysée Treaty and transferred it into its work with the young citizens of France and the Federal Republic of Germany. On the whole, the initial participants in exchanges throughout the 1960s and 1970s undoubtedly benefitted from their time spent in the partner country and this can be seen in a variety of ways. The work that had been done in the post-war years obtained significant support from the office to continue facilitating connections between civilians. Through professional, academic and extra-curricular exchanges, young people were able to obtain first-hand experience of the culture and language that had been emphasised in their school curriculums after the 1963 Élysée Treaty. In the period of uncertainty in the 1970s, the FGYO also promoted new pathways to tackle unemployment through work experience exchanges. Additionally, the promotion of early student exchanges is a key aspect of the office's work which has gone on to play an important role in European integration.

The 1980s saw real development on this front, which meant that the office further adapted its goals to incorporate a sense of 'European compatibility', while proposing a continuation of Franco-German friendship.¹¹⁶ The growth of other Franco-German 'figureheads' has also forced the FGYO to redefine the scope of its activity. For example, the creation of the Franco-German television channel ARTE in the 1990s added to the wider sense of improved cultural relations between the two countries.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the creation of the Franco-German University in 2000 offered students the opportunity to study at a collection of universities and graduate with two degrees, which would be recognised in both France and Germany.

In continually evolving its aims, the office has avoided a 'dispersal' of Franco-German cooperation, while at the same time highlighting its own unique goals.¹¹⁸ In recent years, particularly when the concept of a wider European identity has been questioned, the FGYO still recognises a need for physical movement to build personal connections and breakdown stereotypes on a bilateral and Europe-wide scale. With this, the office has changed from an organisation developed in order to create a sense of

¹¹⁶ Beilecke, 'Continuité, renouveau et impératif européen : l'OFAJ dans les années 1980' in *Les Jeunes dans les relations transnationales*, ed. by Bock and others, pp. 117-47 (p. 144).

¹¹⁷ Bettina Kaps, 'Wie tief geht die Freundschaft?', *Die Tageszeitung: taz*, 22 January 1993, <<https://taz.de/!1633921/>> [accessed 20 January 2020] p. 9.

¹¹⁸ Defrance and Pfeil, *L'Office Franco-Allemand Pour La Jeunesse a 50 Ans*, p. 84.

harmony in the post-war generation, to considering itself an ‘outil d'avant- garde pour l'élaboration d'une identité européenne.’¹¹⁹

Hopefully there will be scope for further study to see the long-term effects on former participants’ lives over the past few decades, moving away from the institutional level on which many scholars focus. With the widespread use of social media and other technologies, it will likely be easier to trace the movements of young people taking part in FGYO programmes today. The fact that the office has survived for nearly sixty years shows that both French and German administrations continue to support positive transnational relations between the two countries. Certainly, the FGYO itself remains confident that young people are not indifferent to maintaining specific Franco-German relations, even if the context has developed significantly since its original inception.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

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