

《Merkel and Macron agree to draw up roadmap to deeper EU inte》

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel and new French President Emmanuel Macron agreed on Monday to draw up a roadmap to deeper European Union integration and opened the door to changing the bloc's treaties to facilitate ambitious reform.

A day after Macron's inauguration, the two leaders struck a consensual tone in Berlin after talks in which they sought to reinvigorate the Franco-German relationship and the European project that has been shaken by Britain's planned exit.

The run-up to the meeting had been marked by a row among senior German politicians over how to respond to Macron's calls for closer EU integration, with some concerned that Berlin would be asked to pay for struggling states that resist reforms.

Merkel said that Germany needs France to succeed, emphasising that "Europe will only do well if there is a strong France".

"We agreed that we want to develop a road map for the European Union's medium-term perspectives," she said in a joint news conference with Macron.

"There is a common conviction that we cannot only deal with Britain's exit (from the EU), but instead that we must above all think about how we can deepen the existing European Union and especially the euro zone."

With Germany's economy -- Europe's largest -- outperforming that of France, the traditional Franco-German motor at the heart of the EU that has often misfired in recent years. Monday's meeting was an effort to inject some dynamism into the partnership.

Crucially, both leaders said they were open to the idea of changing the EU's treaties.

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, an arch conservative who has come to personify Berlin's focus on fiscal rectitude, had suggested that Macron's idea of creating a budget and finance minister for the euro zone was unrealistic because it would require politically thorny changes to the EU treaty.

But both leaders said they could tackle treaty change.

"In the past, the subject of treaty change was a French taboo. It will no longer be the case," said the French president, who earlier arrived at the chancellery to cheers from a crowd chanting "Macron! Macron!" and waving European flags.

Merkel said that, from Germany's viewpoint, treaty change would be possible, adding: "I would be ready to do this,

but first we will work on what we want to reform."

