

Euratom

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Negotiations on the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) sometimes proved quite difficult. France, for example, was against Euratom possessing any powers whatsoever as regards the military use of the atom. The French Army was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons and was afraid that the EAEC might interfere in what appeared to be a national strategic aim. Despite being a little ahead of its partners in nuclear research, France did not have the resources to finance such a powerful industry by itself. It therefore hoped to share the cost of civil nuclear research with Euratom so that it might then devote itself entirely to military nuclear research.

This prospect did not appeal to France's partners who were very reluctant to countenance nuclear weapons. For example, Germany voluntarily abandoned production of all nuclear arms. The four other countries neither had the desire nor the financial resources to possess them. They, too, came out in favour of a ban on nuclear weapons. However, since they wanted the negotiations to come to a successful conclusion, they eventually had to bow to France's determination. It was therefore decided to give the members of Euratom discretion to use the fruits of military nuclear research, subject to the provision of international controls.

France's partners also wondered whether to embark on the nuclear adventure without the help of the Americans, to whom Belgium, incidentally, had been supplying uranium from the Congo in exchange for considerable material aid since the Second World War. For their part, the Americans were all the more in favour of a European nuclear community if it restricted itself to the peaceful use of atomic energy and if it could lead Europe towards integration. Hostile to the spread of nuclear arms, they did not, however, support the military programme of France, which country seemed to want to go it alone. They wanted even less to see the emergence of an independent European nuclear force.