

The Saar question

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From 1947 onwards, the Saar was detached from the French occupied zone in Germany and became part of a customs, [economic and monetary union](#) with France. Although the Saar Regional Government did enjoy political autonomy, it remained under the authority of the High Commissioner, Gilbert Grandval, who represented the French Government. There was, therefore, a real economic frontier between the Saar and the rest of Germany. The Americans and the British were prompt in their efforts to prevent France from integrating the Saar into France more closely.

For its part, the German Government called openly for an end to the [special status](#) granted to the Saar and for its reunification with the remainder of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). It was Chancellor Adenauer's intention to use the ECSC negotiations to have his way on this issue. He also made use of the platform provided by the Council of Europe to try to bring pressure to bear on France on the issue of making the Saar once more part of Germany. Because of its own political, economic and military interests, France refused to consider these requests. Finally, although Adenauer was not prepared to abandon [Germany's territorial claims](#), France signed the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) on behalf of the Saarbrücken Government, which it also represented in the ECSC Council of Ministers, although the Landtag of the Saar appointed its own representatives to the Common Assembly. Notwithstanding these compromise agreements, the status of the Saar continued to be a bone of contention between the two countries.

In the autumn of 1953, the Council of Europe resumed talks aimed at finding a solution to the Saar question. In the Assembly, the Dutch delegate, [Marinus van der Goes van Naters](#), proposed that the Saar be given the status of a European territory. Increasing international pressure and the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) in August 1953 forced France to soften its position. On 23 October 1954, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and France signed the [Paris Agreements](#) which put an end to the occupation of West Germany and set out the terms for settling the Saar issue. In particular, it was agreed that the region would be given the [status of a European territory](#) within the enlarged framework of Western European Union (WEU). However, the agreement still had to be ratified by the inhabitants of the Saar, who were unhappy with the [French presence](#).

In the [referendum](#) of 23 October 1955, 67.7 % of the electorate in the Saar rejected the European territory status proposed in the Paris Agreements. France was therefore obliged to come to terms with the return of the Saar to Germany. On 27 October 1956, the [Luxembourg Agreements](#), signed by France and the Federal Republic, provided for the [political reintegration of the Saar](#) into Germany on 1 January 1957. The signing of this Agreement finally put an end to a long-running dispute in Franco-German relations, and it served to further negotiations with a view to the canalisation of the Moselle River from France, through Luxembourg to Germany.