

The Nouvelles Équipes Internationales (NEI)

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The *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* (NEI)

The *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* (New International Teams — NEI), officially founded in June 1947 at Chaudfontaine, near Liège, were openly inspired by Christian Democracy. They counted among their ranks such eminent Europeans as Robert Schuman, Georges Bidault, Alcide De Gasperi and Konrad Adenauer. The NEI was founded on the initiative of the French Popular Republican, Robert Bichet, who was very quickly supported by the Belgian, Désiré Lamalle, and the President of the Belgian Christian Socialist Party, Auguste de Schryver. The NEI was a fairly flexible association of individuals and aimed at establishing a Christian Democratic International. The movement was, nevertheless, accessible to non-Catholics if they accepted the central theme of social democracy.

Originally, the NEI were first and foremost conceived as a way of blocking the road to Communism, and as a response to the *Kominform*, created by Stalin in October 1947 with the aim of ensuring regular contact between European Communist parties. However, the NEI quickly saw European integration as the best way of defending the Christian values of Western Europe when facing the Soviet bloc in a Cold War context. The NEI focused more on the social rather than the economic aspect of European integration, in this way remaining loyal to the Christian Socialist doctrine that proclaims the primacy of the individual human being. The NEI carried out an intensive campaign aimed at the general public and, in particular, at young people. In 1965, they renamed themselves European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD).