

The signing of the ECSC Treaty

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On 18 April 1951, the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was signed in Paris by Robert Schuman for France, Konrad Adenauer for the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Paul van Zeeland and Joseph Meurice for Belgium, Count Carlo Sforza for Italy, Joseph Bech for Luxembourg and Dirk Stikker and Jan van den Brink for the Netherlands.

The Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) created several institutions responsible for the pooling of Europe's coal and steel resources and, in addition, for maintaining peace in Europe:

- a High Authority assisted by a Consultative Committee;
- a Common Assembly;
- a Court of Justice;
- a Special Council of Ministers.

The High Authority's supranational character was a major breakthrough. The Members of the High Authority did not actually represent their own country's interests but were under oath to defend the general interest of the Member States. They enjoyed wide-ranging powers to help them achieve this aim. For example, they were able to intervene in national coal and steel markets but without being able to replace the existing businesses as such. The High Authority's financial autonomy, which was guaranteed by a 'tax' based on a maximum 1 % levy on the turnover of coal and steel companies, reinforced its independence vis-à-vis the six governments.