

'Luxembourg to be the first seat of the Schuman Plan' from the Luxemburger Wort (25 July 1952)

Caption: In an article printed on 25 July 1952, the Luxembourg newspaper Luxemburger Wort looks back at the difficult negotiations regarding the choice of headquarters for the institutions of the the European Coal and Steel Community, which eventually opted, provisionally, for Luxembourg.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 25.07.1952, n° 207; 105e année. Luxembourg: Imprimerie Saint-Paul. "Luxemburg erster Sitz des Schumanplanes", p. 1.

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/luxembourg_to_be_the_first_seat_of_the_schuman_plan_from_the_luxemburger_wort_25_july_1952-en-a8f56823-58f9-4481-b049-oda39347f01b.html



Last updated: 06/07/2016

Luxembourg to be the first seat of the Schuman Plan

The High Authority and the Court of Justice will begin operating here provisionally on 10 August / A decision will be made in September regarding the seat of the European Coal and Steel Community

Paris, 26 July. In what was, by all accounts, an emotional debate, lasting, with various interruptions, from yesterday morning until 3 a.m. this morning, the Foreign Ministers of the six nations of the Schuman Plan agreed that the temporary seat of the institutions of the European Coal and Steel Community are to be located in the cities of Luxembourg and Strasbourg. Under the ruling, which will come into effect on 10 August, the Community's High Authority and Court of Justice will commence their activities in Luxembourg, while the Parliamentary Assembly will meet in Strasbourg, the home of the Council of Europe. Luxembourg and Strasbourg will serve only as temporary seats, however, and Ministers will have to decide at a later conference — albeit only provisionally — where the Schuman Plan authorities will be based. The permanent seat of the European Coal and Steel Community will eventually be determined during a third stage.

The following communiqué was issued early this morning at the end of the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the six Schuman Plan countries:

‘The Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community came into force on 25 July 1952 with the depositing of all the instruments of ratification. A Conference of the Ministers signatory to the Treaty was held in Paris on 24 and 25 July to determine the measures to be taken with a view to implementing the Treaty. At the Conference, the Ministers acknowledged the work of the Interim Committee set up by the Treaty and approved its recommendations, particularly those relating to the Community's language arrangements, the allocation of producers and consumers seats on the Consultative Committee, the provision of a financial administration for the Community and the statute of the Members of the High Authority and of the Court of Justice.

‘The High Authority and the Court of Justice will take up their duties on 10 August. Appointments to the offices of President, Vice-President and Members will be announced in a separate communication on the same day. The choice of the temporary seat has been held over to the next Conference of Foreign Ministers of the six Member States.

‘In the interim, the High Authority and the Court of Justice will begin operating in Luxembourg, and the Assembly will hold its first session at Strasbourg on 10 September. The decision with regard to where it will be based will depend on talks to be held very shortly in response to the French proposal concerning the future status of the Saar. A Franco-Italian proposal for a study of a draft European policy to be carried out by the Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community has been submitted and will be discussed at the next Conference of the six Ministers of Foreign Affairs.’

The following eminent persons have been appointed as Members of the High Authority:

France: Jean Monnet and Léon Daum;

Federal Republic of Germany: Franz Etzel, lawyer and Member of the Bundestag, and Erich Potthoff, Head of the German Delegation in the Ruhr Authority;

Italy: Enzo Giacchero, Member of Parliament;

The Netherlands: Dirk Spierenburg;

Luxembourg: Albert Wehrer, Luxembourg's Ambassador in Paris;

Belgium: Gaston Eyskens, former Prime Minister.

The ninth Member will be selected by his eight colleagues at a later date. The most likely choice is Belgium's Paul Finet.

In Brussels, the Belga press agency reported that Gaston Eyskens, in response to a question on this very issue, had said that he would turn down the post, if it were officially offered to him.

It was also agreed that the four languages spoken in the six countries (German, French, Dutch and Italian) would all be adopted as the official languages.

The French Press Agency (AFP) reported that the Italian, Massimo Pirotti, had been appointed President of the Court of Justice of the European Coal and Steel Community.

The Saar question — the biggest obstacle to unification

The decision to name Luxembourg and Strasbourg as provisional seats was taken only after a lengthy exchange of views which focused particularly on the Saar question. This has proved to be the biggest obstacle to unification, Chancellor Adenauer having increasingly hardened his stance vis-à-vis French proposals concerning the selection of the capital of the European Coal and Steel Community.

The Federal Chancellor had apparently already spoken out against both Strasbourg and Saarbrücken and in favour of The Hague during the morning session when Schuman was reiterating his 'idea'. Mr Schuman's proposal likewise received little backing from the other delegations. His failure to respond to the Chancellor's precise questions concerning the implementation of 'Europeanisation' and the future status of the Saarland gave the German delegation the impression that what mattered above all to France was that the seat of the Schuman Plan authorities lay within its own sphere of influence.

The Chancellor left the afternoon session in a sombre mood, postponing any statements to the press and indicating that he might return to the Conference later. Meanwhile, a compromise plan was being drawn up: the internationalisation of the 'Europeanisation' of the Saar region as the seat of the European authorities, a 'mere idea' put forward by Schuman on Wednesday, was provisionally to be the subject of bilateral Franco-German negotiations. Should agreement be reached, Saarbrücken would then become the permanent and Strasbourg the temporary seat of the High Authority; should there be a failure to reach agreement on the Saar question, then the whole issue would be looked at again in late September.

The Benelux countries, which had put forward The Hague, Liège and Luxembourg, also gave the unexpected French bid a cool reception. They felt that the choice of Saarbrücken would represent a blow to the British Eden Plan, under which all European organisations would be affiliated to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, thus allowing the United Kingdom 'to maintain links'. However, the British delegation did indicate that the United Kingdom would agree to Saarbrücken, provided that close links between the Council of Europe and the European Coal and Steel Community could be maintained.

The afternoon session broke up, again without agreement, and the Ministers then agreed to meet at 10.30 p.m. for an unscheduled late-night session. It was suspected that Chancellor Adenauer had, in the meantime, been in contact with Bonn.

Alcide De Gasperi, the Italian Prime Minister, took on the role of 'honest broker' at the late-night session. He again put forward the compromise proposal tabled in the afternoon session that no decision on where the Commission should be based be taken until late September or early October. This would allow France and the Federal Republic of Germany to reach agreement through bilateral negotiations on the as yet unclarified Schuman proposals for the 'Europeanisation' of the Saar. Should agreement be reached, Strasbourg would become the temporary, and Saarbrücken the permanent seat of the European Coal and Steel Community, in accordance with the Schuman proposal. Should no agreement be reached prior to 15 September, the whole

issue would be reviewed.

As De Gasperi explained during a break in the proceedings: ‘Persuading France to reach agreement on the Saar question is more important than determining the possible location of the Coal and Steel capital. Failure is, however, out of the question; we have to remain optimistic.’ He added that the debate on where the seat of the High Authority should be located was now also beginning to complicate the issue of the appointment of Members to the High Authority, which, according to reliable reports, had already been determined.

Nevertheless, Chancellor Adenauer maintained that The Hague or some other ‘neutral location’ should be chosen as the ECSC capital and, in this regard, he was in agreement with the Benelux countries. In the end, Turin was agreed upon, but then, at the eleventh hour, this decision was overturned in favour of the cities of Luxembourg und Strasbourg.

In accordance with De Gasperi’s proposals, Foreign Ministers are once again due to meet in September, in order to agree, firstly, on a new, temporary seat and, secondly, on a permanent seat for the European Coal and Steel Community. The unanimous adoption of the De Gasperi proposals, however, is a clear demonstration that, providing France and Germany have reached agreement on the Saar issue by 15 September, the original French proposals — for Strasbourg as the temporary, and Saarbrücken as the permanent seat — will be taken as unanimously adopted by all six Schuman Plan nations.

As the AFP has already pointed out, whichever city ultimately plays host to the Schuman Plan is bound to be regarded as the capital of any future united Europe.