

Letter from Jean Monnet to Robert Schuman (Luxembourg, 6 January 1953)

Caption: On 6 January 1953, Jean Monnet sends Robert Schuman and Paul-Henri Spaak a letter in which he outlines his vision of the European Political Community (EPC).

Source: Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Correspondance 1947-1953. Lausanne: Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Centre de recherches européennes, 1986. 188 p. (Cahiers rouges). p. 158-159.

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Luxembourg, 6 January 1952 [sic; should read 1953]

Mr President,

I enclose a copy of the letter that I have just sent in my personal capacity to Paul-Henri Spaak and to members of the ad hoc Assembly concerning the Constitutional Commission's proposals on the role and place of the European Executive Council within the political Community.

As you will see, those proposals may well challenge the very foundations of the policy followed since the proposal that you put forward two and a half years ago on 9 May 1950, the success of which is vital for European unity.

Yours faithfully,
Jean Monnet

Annex

Letter from Jean Monnet to Paul-Henri Spaak

6 January 1953

Mr President,

I have just read with interest the Bulletin on the official information and documents of the Constitutional Commission which sets out in detail the proposals that the ad hoc Assembly will consider this week.

If I have understood correctly, the guiding principles in these proposals are: elections by direct universal suffrage; incorporation of the Coal and Steel Community and the Defence Community into the Political Community; a procedure for subsequent extension of this initial field of the Political Community, with each extension being subject to unanimous agreement by the Member States.

Amongst all these issues, I feel that I should immediately tell you my personal reaction to the scope of the recommendations concerning the role and place of the European Executive Council.

These recommendations propose that all decisions of the European Executive Council are made subject to the assent of the Council of National Ministers except in the areas of coal and steel and defence, which means all those areas to which the Political Community might be extended in the future. As you can see, at every turn, the European Executive Council will be subordinate to the Council of National Ministers which will hold the real power. Can the people of Europe be made to vote in elections for a Parliament that controls an executive with no decision-making powers and which is, nevertheless, answerable to that Parliament?

Clearly, should this be the case, instead of the Political Community being supranational in accordance with the mandate of the ad hoc Assembly, and rather than being a step forward, it will signal the end of European integration. Within this intergovernmental system, there will be no European authority able to take decisions and act in accordance with rules fixed by common accord or in the interest of the Community. If there is to be no such European Authority, then there will be nothing. The responsibility and duty of governments is to protect national interests and not common interests. If the European Executive Council does not have its own decision-making powers, and if, as is proposed, that power is reserved for the Council of National

Ministers, there will be merely compromises between national interests which is the system under which Europe lived between the two wars that were brought about by that system.

This will not just block future progress. This retrograde step will inevitably adversely affect what has already been achieved. The supranational Coal and Steel Community will not, in my view, be able to assume its responsibilities if it is subordinate to, and part of, this intergovernmental system that is incompatible with the principle of the separation of powers (not only between supranational institutions but between those institutions and national governments) which underlies the operations of the Coal and Steel Community.

The consequences could be so serious that I thought it best to inform you immediately of these proposals. I enclose a memorandum concerning them, and I hope that they will not be endorsed by the ad hoc Assembly.

Jean Monnet