

Letter from Jean Monnet to Robert Schuman (Paris, 15 August 1950)

Caption: On 15 August 1950, Jean Monnet forwards to Robert Schuman a memorandum on relations between the institutions of the Council of Europe and those provided for by the Schuman Plan. The Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe is a source of inspiration for the Common Assembly.

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. 48-53.

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[Paris] 15 August 1950

Mr President,

I have remained in Paris to work on the issue of relations between the Schuman Plan institutions and the Council of Europe. I felt this was necessary after a short conversation that I had with Mr Guy Mollet before he left for Strasbourg, when I sensed that he was very uneasy.

A few telephone calls to Strasbourg confirmed my impression that everything there is in complete disarray and that the Consultative Assembly was likely to adopt a motion that would hamper or perhaps even jeopardise the fulfilment of everything that we have worked for. The British are waging a clever campaign to thwart our plans.

I asked young Pierre Henry to come to Paris and give me certain further information, and I spoke to Clappier on the telephone. Over the weekend, I drew up a memorandum, of which I enclose a copy. I have this evening given Pierre Henry copies for Mr Bidault, Mr Reynaud, Mr Philip, Mr Maurice Schumann, Mr Guy Mollet and Mr Bonnefous, together with a letter, of which I am also enclosing a copy for you.

I also telephoned each of them and told them that you had not seen the memorandum that I am sending you today, but that I knew, after our telephone conversation, that it reflected our views.

I shall be staying here tomorrow (15 August) in order to monitor the reaction of our friends in Strasbourg by telephone. I hope to be able to leave on Wednesday morning and return here on 28 August. Meanwhile, I should be pleased to hear your reactions to the enclosed documents, together with any observations that you might have.

If you address your correspondence to 18 rue de Martignac, my secretary will forward it to me as soon as possible.

I hope that you are enjoying your stay.

Your devoted servant,

Jean Monnet.

Annex

Memorandum by JM on relations between the institutions provided for in the Schuman Plan and the Council of Europe

14 August 1950

From the very beginning of the Schuman Plan, and throughout the subsequent development work, we have devoted a great deal of attention to considering both the form of the institutions which we felt were essential for the implementation of the Plan and the relationship that might be established between those institutions and the Council of Europe.

Having overcome the problems that we encountered, we now think that we have found a formula which will enable us to achieve the desired result.

The purpose of this memorandum is to give a brief description of:

- I. The institutions which the six countries taking part in the Paris Conference think are essential in order to establish the principle of supranationality, which lies at the very heart of the Schuman Plan, in the field of coal and steel.
- II. The difficulties inherent in the *current* Statute of the Council of Europe which have been encountered in the attempt to establish an organic link between the Schuman Plan institutions and the Council of Europe;
- III. Specific suggestions to ensure an *immediate association* between the Schuman Plan institutions and the Council of Europe during a *transitional period*. This transitional period will come to end once the Council of Europe develops a supranational form and existence.

Institutions required for the implementation of the Schuman Plan

In the light of the French proposals and the work done by the Conference of the Six, it was decided that the following institutions were essential for the implementation of the Schuman Plan:

1. A *High Authority*, composed of prominent independent eminent persons, whose tasks would be defined in the Treaty adopted by the Parliament of each country involved, and which would exercise specific and limited powers delegated to it at supranational level.
2. A *Common Assembly*, composed of members elected by the Parliaments of the countries involved, which would meet every year to review, at its absolute discretion, the action taken by the High Authority and to pass judgment on that action: either approval, which would mean that all the Members of the High Authority would be deemed to have discharged their duty, or disapproval, which would result in the collective replacement of all the Members of the High Authority.
3. A *Special Council*, composed of the Ministers directly responsible for economic policy in the various countries involved and given the task of reconciling the High Authority's activities at supranational level with national policy requirements in those countries.
4. Lastly, a *Court of Justice*, composed of prominent independent eminent persons and responsible for interpreting the Treaty.

The Schuman Plan institutions and the Council of Europe

We reviewed these conclusions very carefully in the light of the Statute of the Council of Europe and the experience acquired from its application in order to determine how the new institutions which are essential for the implementation of the Schuman Plan might be most usefully associated with the Council of Europe and help to strengthen its authority. We were guided here by the fact that the main idea of the Schuman Plan is to establish a supranational system in a limited but vitally important area of economic life and that the ultimate responsibility for implementing this Plan needs to be given to bodies made up not of representatives of the various Governments but of individuals exercising collective sovereignty in the interest of the community as a whole.

In our review, we were unable to find a formula that would enable an organic relationship to be established between the High Authority and the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. The relationship planned between the High Authority and the Special Council of Ministers for the implementation of the Schuman proposals is of a completely new type: it is a relationship between a supranational body and Ministers of Governments which have agreed to its rules. The current Council of Europe Statute would not allow such a relationship, given that the Committee of Ministers includes representatives of Governments whose countries have not accepted the Schuman proposals and the delegation of sovereignty to a supranational body for which they provide.

This being the case, we must try to determine what relationship might be established between the Plan

institutions and the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly. Under the Council of Europe Statute, the Consultative Assembly is subordinate to the Committee of Ministers, to which it has no more than the power to make recommendations. It would therefore be impossible to give the Consultative Assembly the role of a responsible assembly to which the reports of the High Authority might be addressed and to which the High Authority itself would ultimately be responsible. In order to establish such a relationship it would be absolutely essential either completely to redraft the Council of Europe Statute or else to abandon the principle of the merging of sovereignties which lies at the very heart of the Schuman proposals.

Could a section of the Strasbourg Assembly become a responsible assembly?

A suggestion was considered that reports by the High Authority might be submitted to the Strasbourg Assembly overall but would be voted on only by the representatives of the six participating countries acting as a section of the Assembly.

To enable this procedure to meet the aims of the Schuman proposal, the Council of Europe Statute would still have to be revised, since, under the current Statute, a section of the Consultative Assembly, as envisaged above, could not have more power than the Assembly itself; it could only report to the Committee of Ministers. Even if the Statute were amended on this point, there would be dangerous implications for the general aims and development of the Council of Europe.

The growing prestige of the Consultative Assembly is a reflection not just of the quality of its members but also of the fact that, like all parliamentary assemblies, its debates are not just academic and of no consequence: they result in recommendations, with each member expressing his responsibility through his vote.

If the suggestion described above were accepted, the majority of the members would be placed in a position where they would take part in a debate but would not be able to vote in order to express the responsibility inherent in parliamentary office. The whole of the Assembly would discuss, but only part of it would vote. There could be no procedure which would more seriously undermine the position of a parliamentary assembly.

The proposed solution

Despite all these problems, we are still determined to find a satisfactory form of relationship between the institutions required to implement the Schuman proposals and the Strasbourg institutions which will enable both sides to help each other to develop.

Given the nature of the two systems of institutions, a basis for constructive and genuine relations might be found in a procedure in which, every year, the President of the Common Assembly and a representative of the High Authority provided for in the Schuman Plan would present the conclusions of the Common Assembly's debates and the High Authority's report to the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly.

At the end of the subsequent debate, the Consultative Assembly could then make whatever recommendation it deemed suitable, in accordance with its own Statute.

Furthermore, we should like to strengthen relations between the two systems of institutions by ensuring that some or all of the parliamentary representatives are members of both the Common Assembly and the Consultative Assembly. In that way, the new experience gained by supranational institutions exercising hitherto unprecedented sovereignty would make a direct contribution towards the strengthening and development of the Council of Europe.

We are putting forward these suggestions so that a link may be established in the immediate future between the institutions essential for the implementation of the Schuman Plan and the Council of Europe and, in particular, its Consultative Assembly.

However, we feel that the Strasbourg Assembly's powers should be extended still further in future.

First of all, as we are proposing for the Schuman Plan, all activities on an international level in Europe such as the establishment of Benelux, the activities of the OEEC, etc., should be the subject of annual reports debated in the Strasbourg Assembly, since the Assembly should, by definition, be aware of all issues affecting the European community.

Secondly, the form of relationship between the Strasbourg Assembly and the Schuman Plan's Common Assembly should be established on no more than a temporary basis, since the very fact that the Council of Europe's Statute is likely to be amended when the development of the various European institutions causes the Strasbourg institutions to extend their role makes a transitional period necessary.

In future, especially, events could bring relations between the Schuman Plan institutions and those of the Council of Europe even closer, if there are changes to the two circumstances which have forced us to envisage new institutions for the implementation of the Schuman Plan, namely:

- the fact that a number of countries represented in the Council of Europe have not yet felt able to delegate part of their sovereignty to joint supranational institutions;
- the fact that, under the Council of Europe's current Statute, the Consultative Assembly cannot perform the duties of an Assembly through which the High Authority must be responsible to the parliaments and people of the countries concerned.

The countries currently taking part in the Conference of the Six have unanimously and repeatedly called for members of the Council of Europe, in particular the United Kingdom, to join them in their initiative and agree to give up part of their sovereignty.

If this invitation were accepted, and if the Statute of the Council of Europe, as a result of the changes that would have to be made to meet the needs of the building of Europe, ultimately created an assembly with genuinely sovereign powers, then the Schuman Plan institutions might be merged with those of the Council of Europe.

In the meantime, the two groups of institutions can together help to create a united Europe, whose institutions will take different forms according to their various requirements and functions; these institutions must be united together not in mechanical uniformity but in a broad community of aspirations and desires in the service of a common goal.