

Letter from the Luxembourg Ambassador to Brussels to the Prime Minister, Joseph Bech (Brussels, 3 November 1955)

Caption: On 3 November 1955, Lambert Schaus, Luxembourg Ambassador to Brussels, sends a letter to the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Joseph Bech, in which he sets out the outcome of the work of the specialised commissions set up by the Intergovernmental Committee.

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Organisations internationales. Comité intergouvernemental créé par la Conférence de Messine. Position luxembourgeoise, AE 7701.

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Letter from the Luxembourg Ambassador in Brussels to Prime Minister Joseph Bech (Brussels, 3 November 1955)

The Ambassador of Luxembourg in Brussels,
Head of Delegation to the Intergovernmental Committee set up by the Messina Conference,
to
His Excellency, Mr Joseph Bech,
Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Luxembourg

Subject: Re-launching Europe

At this stage in the work of the Intergovernmental Committee, I deem it my duty to submit a written report to the Government as a follow-up to the conversations between members of the Government and the delegation that have taken place over recent months.

Attached are notes concerning the reports submitted by the various committees under the Intergovernmental Committee. They were drafted by our delegates in those committees.

These notes aim to distil from the often voluminous reports of the various committees those aspects of special interest to us.

I would suggest that each note be studied not only by the Ministry responsible for the issue in question but also by other Ministries, so that we may compare the different viewpoints and ensure, where necessary, that the opinion given by the delegate as a specialist in a given area does not impinge upon issues dealt with by other Ministries.

As head of delegation, I believe it appropriate to preface these notes from our delegates with some general remarks.

[...]

II. Sensitive issues for Luxembourg

In general, the Luxembourg delegation sought to speak in the debates only when it was specifically invited to do so or on issues of direct concern to our country.

We must stress, however, that several proposals from the Luxembourg delegation were welcomed, notably in the Subcommittee on Air Transport and the Subcommittee on Post, Telegraph and Telecommunications.

Here, in brief, are the points to which we must pay special attention.

(a) Agricultural issues

The report of the Committee on the Common Market skirts over the agricultural issue. There was no wish to include agricultural experts in the delegations. Perhaps it was thought that this would save time, but the problems facing agriculture in the context of the common market have not been resolved. As a result, the difficulties have been pushed to the back.

A solution must be found to this problem either now or in the very near future.

We must therefore establish our position so that we may defend it when circumstances require.

We must try to ensure that, within the common market, our agriculture enjoys at least the same guarantees as we have under the BLEU (Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union) and in the Benelux.

However, psychologically, it would perhaps be a mistake to present our point of view on the common market in a solely negative way. A formula has to be found that, while being in essence satisfactory from our point of view, would appear positive and constructive and which, both at first glance and in substance, would not dispute the principle of the common market.

If the principle of an organised agricultural market within an overall common market were adopted, it would perhaps be possible to reconcile our specific national interests with those of a common market as such.

(b) Wine-related issues

The delegation has not yet raised the issue of protecting Luxembourg's wine industry in the common market. It seemed better, for the time being at least, not to insist on this issue. The wine industry is part and parcel of agriculture, and our requirements in terms of wine can be presented when the agricultural market as a whole is considered in more detail.

However, we must not lose sight of this question that is of special importance to our country. The fact is that we cannot demand a system for our wine industry similar to the one we are demanding for agriculture, because the issue facing our wine industry is primarily one of exports.

One thing appears certain: we must review this issue in detail and submit to our partners one or more solutions that they might find acceptable. If we are going to ask our partners for a suitable system for our wine, it is up to us to say how the system will be implemented.

This problem requires us to take a position as a matter of urgency, because, depending on future political developments, the issue could, sooner or later, be raised at international level.

(c) Welfare issues

Our preference would seem to be for free access to employment rather than the free movement of persons as such. However, within the Intergovernmental Committee, there seems to be quite a strong inclination in favour of the free movement of persons.

Our country's demographic profile requires us to ensure that we have some safety valves here.

Amongst the possible formulae that we could support, the one adopted by the OEEC seems to us the best. But some delegations, and probably also the Chairman-Coordinator, would want to push things further.

The safeguard clauses that we might obtain will probably be only temporary. Could that satisfy our requirements?

(d) Nuclear issues

This is a totally new subject for us. For the time being, we are not able to make an effective contribution in this field. Our nuclear energy needs, it seems, have not yet been determined. However, it is probably not advisable to dissociate ourselves from the action in the nuclear energy field that is planned in connection with the Intergovernmental Committee. However, if this action is undertaken, the resulting costs for participating countries will be relatively very high.

The question is, therefore, how can we take part with our partners in this field in order to protect our current and future interests without committing to costs that could be very burdensome for our country and which might well be disproportionate to the advantages that we might currently draw from such collaboration.

(e) Inland waterway issues

Although the Messina Resolution refers in so many words to ‘a joint study [...] of development projects, centred on the establishment of a European network of canals, etc.’, the question of the canalisation of the Moselle has not, to date, been specifically referred to at the Intergovernmental Committee’s deliberations.

We have, in the past, approached the German and French Governments to prevent this issue from being dealt with as part of a Franco-German dialogue. It might therefore have seemed logical for us to take advantage of the opportunity provided in the Intergovernmental Committee to elevate this issue to the multilateral level. However, in line with the instructions that we received, our delegation took no initiative in this regard.

The Intergovernmental Committee therefore took no position on this question.

We may, however, note with satisfaction that, in the table in Annex V to Document No 336, giving details of the planned inland waterways projects, neither Germany nor France refers to the canalisation of the Moselle, either under the works completed before 31 December 1959 or those under way on that date or due to start after that date.

[...]