

## Address given by Walter Hallstein at the first meeting of the EEC Council of Ministers (25 January 1958)

**Caption:** Address delivered by Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community (EEC), at the first meeting of the Councils of the EEC and the EAEC held in Brussels on 25 January 1958.

**Source:** Protokoll über die erste Tagung der Räte der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft und der Europäischen Atomgemeinschaft am 25. Januar 1958 in Brüssel, CEE EUR/CM/20f/58 mts. Brüssel: Räte der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft und der Europäischen Atomgemeinschaft, 25.01.1958. "Anhang III: Ansprache von Walter Hallstein, Präsident der Kommission der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft".

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## Address given by Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission of the European Economic Community, on the occasion of the first meeting of the EEC Council of Ministers on 25 January 1958

Mr President,  
Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Commission of the European Economic Community, I should like to congratulate you on the constitution of the Council of Ministers of that Community.

I congratulate you, Mr President, on the words which you used to describe the ultimate purpose and the main aims of the European Community. Indeed, in its different configurations, as the Coal and Steel Community, the Economic Community and the Atomic Energy Community, this Community is not just a manifestation of economic or technical utility. It is too. And we all know how difficult our work is, because even in the narrowest area of technical expediency we are faced with new, complicated problems, where pressing interests are at stake. For example, the European Economic Community calls on us, through the establishment of a common market and the gradual approximation of the Member States' economic policy, to promote the harmonised development of economic activity within the Community and continuous, balanced economic growth, greater stability, a faster rise in standards of living and closer relations between the Member States, and, in so doing, to fulfil the social policy responsibilities which you, Mr President, have underlined.

However, the deeper foundation for our work and its surest legitimation is that all our organisations are not just there for their own sakes. They are elements in a development process, steps on a longer journey. At the end of that journey there is to be a politically unified Europe, an organised Community of European peoples and states which is capable of planning and acting with a united front in the world and thereby of safeguarding or restoring the status and role which Europe merits on the basis of its historical achievements, on the basis of its specific potential and capacities, and for the sake of the high principles of human conduct which it embodies.

We are also aware — and this ultimately encourages us in our efforts — that, in striving for political unity and union for Europe, we are not seeking to create something completely new in a vacuum, as it were. No, we merely wish to put the existing European unity, which has been concealed by the national developments of the recent past, into an appropriate form, that is to say a form which takes account of the modern opportunities and necessities created in a situation where people and nations live together, and, above all, of the fact that the world has shrunk to a degree previously unimaginable. However, as you rightly said, Mr President, that existing European unity is an internal unity: it is the unity of European culture, the unity of its moral foundations; it is the shared conviction of the inviolable dignity and liberty of human beings, especially freedom of opinion and of belief. It is, therefore, also true that the Community's internal effects, its spiritual integration, its appeal, do not end at the borders arbitrarily created as a result of military occupation but that they will give rise to courage, confidence and hope for peaceful development towards freedom on the other side of those borders.

It must be the aim of all those who have particular responsibilities within our Communities to keep the deeper unity of Europe firmly in their sights. It is the beacon that points the way when we start on a journey which will involve rocks and shallows, darkness, and sometimes heavy seas. I speak of a journey, as the Treaty which established our Community is not a static treaty, and those who implement it will not be able simply to execute and administer the Treaty's articles and paragraphs routinely. Rather, the Treaty is dynamic, and that is one of its best features. It envisages a development, a continual progression; indeed, in many places it even opens up the prospect of expanding our Community activity beyond the aims of the Treaty *per se*. That is why we need to realise our ultimate aims.

We also need to do this in order to establish the right relationship, a good relationship, with the world around us. Our Community is open to all European states, open to full accession or partial accession, i.e. by

means of ‘association’. However, it also wishes to be recognised beyond the borders of Europe among the nations of the world as a welcome and well-regarded member.

In this work, the Council of Ministers has a lofty and crucial role to play. Through it, the Member States participate in the Community’s decision-making process, and, in this respect, the Council may be called the Community’s federative body. It is a particular feature of the Council that its responsibility has two facets.

One facet relates to the states. National powers in the field of economic policy are not abolished. Only some of those powers have been merged and transferred to the European Economic Community. This highlights a fact that has wider importance. When we talk about European unification, we do not mean, for example, European centralism or some entity comparable with a united state. The European Communities comprise, of themselves and as the beneficiaries of their effects, not only European citizens, to whom they address their measures and decisions; they also comprise the states and their governments. Even the most fervent Europeans have never imagined in their wildest dreams a European political organisation which dispenses with states, for example. In other words, the furthest-reaching model is that of a federal state. Or, to put it in more general terms, the Europe that we are striving for is not an egalitarian, streamlined Europe. Rather, *‘l’Europe, c’est la diversité’* — Europe means diversity, variety. We would be giving up one of Europe’s greatest assets and, at the same time, be blocking one of the greatest sources of European power if we deprived ourselves of the wealth represented by the great variety of European talents. This diversity gives rise to a continuous, highly fruitful debate between the European peoples. It creates competition, which constantly raises the bar for European achievement.

Nor should we forget, in fact we should remember at this time with gratitude, that our own existence, the existence of the European Communities and its institutions, is a product of the statecraft of the six nations forming this Community — I will mention here just one name from the most recent phase of integration, Paul-Henri Spaak — and this experience alone is good reason to have confidence in the joint work of the six states and their governments. Where the dynamic side of the Treaty is particularly apparent, where the Treaty itself includes a call to further development, the first function of the Council of Ministers to which I am referring, namely to enable the States to contribute to our development, becomes particularly evident. As a particularly striking example I would cite Article 145: ‘To ensure that the objectives set out in this Treaty are attained, the Council shall, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty: ensure coordination of the general economic policies of the Member States’. In performing this task of harmonising economic policy each member of the Council will first proceed from the existing legitimate interests of his own state, which he will then place in the context of the common interest.

The other facet of the Council’s responsibility becomes apparent where it acts as a Community institution, i.e. as an institution of the supranational entity, with its own sovereign rights, existing independently alongside the states. As a Community body, the Council is involved in organising and administering the sovereign rights which the Member States have surrendered and transferred to the Community. It goes without saying that it is this facet of its nature which is particularly important for us, the Commission.

If we look at the two functions of the Council of Ministers’ responsibility together, we can see that it lies at the interface of two sovereignties, a supranational sovereignty and a national sovereignty. It must take into account both the interests of the Community and the interests of the individual states and strike a balance that gives both their rightful place. It is in the nature of the work of integration as a dynamic process that it is the Community that the Council will keep in view above all.

The considered solution adopted in the Treaty, which is concerned with creating an internal organisational balance for the Community, gives the Commission a place particularly close to the Council of Ministers. The Commission is a purely supranational institution. The Treaty states that Members of the Commission must, in the general interest of the Community, be completely independent in the performance of their duties and expressly requires each Member State to respect this principle and not to seek to influence the Members of the Commission in the performance of their duties. In order to ensure the proper functioning and development of the common market, the Commission must ensure that the provisions of the Treaty are applied, deliver recommendations or opinions and take certain decisions.

However, at this time it is particularly important to stress that, through the Treaty, the Council and the Commission are required to cooperate closely with one another. Under Article 162, 'the Council and the Commission shall consult each other and shall settle by common accord their methods of collaboration'. I speak for all Members of the Commission when I say that we share the conviction and the wish that you, Mr President, have expressed in these words: 'Nothing will be more valuable for the three Communities than for bonds of direct, resolute, flexible cooperation to develop between their leaders'. Be assured of our unreserved willingness to cooperate closely and sincerely with you in the knowledge that we are responding both to the will of the European peoples and to a historic need, as we now work to transform our Community from a treaty-based programme into the work of real people.