

Excerpt from the address given by Joseph Bech in Louvain (2 February 1954)

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Excerpt from the address given by Joseph Bech (Leuven, 2 February 1954)

The Schuman Plan is the first European community with a supranational directing authority at its head. Six countries have, subject to permanent control and safeguard guarantees, transferred real governing powers to this community to enable it to carry out a vitally important mission, albeit one of limited scope. This can truly be said to be a revolutionary stage in the organising of relations between European States. The hopes of our peoples are invested in this, the first experiment of its kind, and hasty criticism must not be allowed to discourage the High Authority from its endeavours. Once the time for hesitation and adjustment has passed, this bold but — in my opinion — necessary undertaking will, I am sure, bear the fruit that all we have given up and all we have put into it in a spirit of European solidarity entitles us to expect of it. I am convinced that a united Europe can only be built by ceding some of our countries' sovereign rights to a supranational authority. In the Schuman Plan we have accepted this approach, with specific safeguard clauses. As the idea of supranationality extends to the political and military fields, we will become more cautious. As a united Europe will necessarily emerge from a context of Community Member States of unequal strength and resources, what place will a small nation like mine have in it?