

## Comments by the Netherlands delegate on the French proposal with regard to the Questionnaire (Paris, 18 July 1947)

**Caption:** On 18 July 1947, the Netherlands delegation to the Committee for European Economic Cooperation (CEEC) comments on the French draft Questionnaire and recalls the causes of the economic crisis affecting European countries.

**Source:** Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques, OECD. Committee for European Economic Co-operation, CEEC. CEEC 03.

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[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/comments\\_by\\_the\\_netherlands\\_delegate\\_on\\_the\\_french\\_proposal\\_with\\_regard\\_to\\_the\\_questionnaire\\_paris\\_18\\_july\\_1947-en-b7af3e14-2a25-41cd-b64c-a22e9232e0ad.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/comments_by_the_netherlands_delegate_on_the_french_proposal_with_regard_to_the_questionnaire_paris_18_july_1947-en-b7af3e14-2a25-41cd-b64c-a22e9232e0ad.html)

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## Statement by the Netherlands Delegate at the meeting of the Committee of European Economic Co-operation held on 17 July, 1947, on the occasion of the discussion of the French proposal with regard to the Questionnaire

Yesterday, in presenting my observations on the French proposal, I pointed out that these comments could only be regarded as being of a general character. Now I should like to go into this question rather more closely. It is not easy to prepare a questionnaire relating to the problems for which it is necessary to find a solution during the five or six coming weeks. But what is necessary, in the first place, is that we should reach agreement on the guiding principles of our work. I am under the impression that there is still a considerable divergence of views on the subject. I will begin my explanations with a brief survey of certain phenomena which lie at the root of the European difficulties of the present day and, in particular, of the difficulties relating to our balances of payments.

1. Insufficient production in Europe. The fact that our existing capacity of production is insufficiently utilised may be regarded as a phenomenon common to all Europe. In speaking of Europe, I include Germany. The German problem cannot be considered apart from the other problems. It is a European one.

This insufficiency of production has an unfavourable influence on the balance of payments of Europe in respect of the rest of the world and leads moreover to an insufficiency of trade among European countries themselves.

2. The fact that there is hardly any trade worthy of the name between the majority of the sixteen countries here represented and south-eastern Europe and the Balkan countries should, in my opinion, be regarded as an additional cause of the difficult situation of our balances of payments. A large part of our supplies was formerly furnished by the latter countries.

3. The maintenance of close relations with the overseas territories is of fundamental importance for the balances of payments of the various European countries. The non-delivery of important consignments of raw materials from these territories and the insufficient production from which they too are suffering has been a serious obstacle to the re-establishment of equilibrium in the balance of payments of Europe.

4. The so-called invisible items figuring in the balances of payments of many European countries represented an important additional contribution. Their value for the balances of payments has been greatly reduced owing to the almost total disappearance of the investments of these countries abroad and to the deterioration of available transport equipment.

I would now like to make a few suggestions with regard to the plan of work which we might find most suitable to adopt.

a) In view of the limited period within which we must carry out our task, it will not be possible to solve every outstanding problem. However, we must put first things first and therefore we should give priority to short-term problems. It is essential to increase production by using present production capacity to the full. All the necessary data must be collected with a view to the drawing up of a summarised statement of the imports from overseas required to reach the objective which I have indicated. In so doing, our main preoccupation must be the United States, but we must also bear in mind that we also depend on other countries overseas for our imports.

b) In order to show that we are doing everything we can to help ourselves, we must bear in mind the need for an increased volume of inter-European trade on a multilateral basis. On this assumption the system of bilateral commercial relations and the consequent monetary agreements would have to be abandoned as far as possible.

c) I would now like to go a little more closely into the question of long-term problems. You are aware that there are numerous plans in different countries, whose objects include increased production through industrialisation. We have not studied these plans in detail but we do know that they are very important and

that is why I wish to emphasise that I do not mean to avoid discussion on this issue. These plans are, for the most part, of a somewhat static character, whereas at the present time we should take into account dynamic realities which, as a result of the work of this Conference, are capable of being modified to such an extent that present projects will have to be considerably altered. A present study of these plans reveals moreover the existence of numerous factors which illustrate the competition existing between the various countries, whereas it is precisely our task to find some positive solution by common agreement. The Netherlands also have a plan which they would like to see adopted here, but each one of us must, in turn, make sacrifices in the common cause.

It is obvious that, in due course, we shall have to discuss our plans and attempt to co-ordinate them.

But the present moment is not yet favourable for this. If we use our own projects as a starting point for our work, it will be impossible to reach a common conclusion. One country might submit a very elaborate plan, another country might have prepared a more modest project, while yet another country might have submitted no plan at all.

Therefore, I propose that we should select the short-term problems as a starting point as far as the questionnaire is concerned and leave the plans on one side. Let us hope that we shall have an opportunity of studying the various national projects.

Finally, I must not fail to emphasise the importance of creating in Europe the conditions by which our continent may once more attract private investments from abroad. I consider such investments as an essential factor in the problems of balance of payments we have to solve.

Grand Palais  
Paris.  
18 July 1947