

Draft Heads of Agreement for a Council of Europe submitted by the British Delegation (18 January 1949)

Caption: On 18 January 1949, the British Government, unable to endorse the draft constituent text for a European Union submitted on 15 January 1949 by the Sub-Committee of the Committee for the Study of European Unity, submits a fresh proposal, and the Committee's deliberations end on 20 January without any agreement having been reached.

Source: Historical Archives of the European Union, Villa il Poggiolo, Florence. Deposits, DEP. Fernand Dehousse, FD. Council of Europe, FD.D.B. Committee for the Study of European Unity, FD.D.B.-01. Working documents, FD-206. Draft Heads of Agreement for a Council of Europe (Submitted to the Committee at its fifth meeting on the 18th January 1949), Doc. Europe n° 8. [s.l.]: Committee for the Study of European Unity, 1949.

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SECRET

Draft Heads of Agreement for a Council of Europe (Submitted to the Committee at its fifth meeting on the 18th January 1949)

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I. Title

There should be constituted a Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe should consist of a Conference and of a Committee of Ministers.

II. Composition of the Council of Europe

(a) The Conference would consist of national delegations nominated by Governments, whose choice need not be restricted to any particular category of persons. National delegations should be led by a Minister. The numbers of national delegations might vary but delegations should not be too large.

A possible scheme would be:

United Kingdom	12
France	12
(Italy	11)
(Germany	11)
Holland	4
Belgium	4
Luxemburg	2

(b) The Committee of Ministers would consist of the Prime Ministers, or the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, or their Deputies, of the participating countries.

III. Functions

(a) The Conference would be empowered to discuss any matter of common concern to the Member countries placed before it by the Committee of Ministers or which it may itself decide to discuss, other than questions relating to defence. No recommendation of the Conference would be in any way binding on Governments. The meetings of the Conference would normally be held in public.

(b) The Committee of Ministers would discuss any matter of common concern brought before it by any Member with the exception of questions relating to defence. It would further discuss any recommendations submitted to it by the Conference. The Committee of Ministers would be held in private.

IV. Frequency of Meetings

(a) The Conference would hold one session a year, the date and duration of which would be determined by it with due regard to the Parliamentary situation in the various countries concerned. In no case, however, should the ordinary session exceed three weeks. Extraordinary sessions could be held with the consent of or at the instance of the Committee of Ministers.

(b) The Committee of Ministers would meet shortly before the Conference in order to prepare the Conference agenda. It could also meet during or after the session of the Conference at any time that might seem to be desirable.

V. Procedure

(a) Voting in the Conference would be by national delegations in proportion to their size, votes being cast by the Heads of Delegations.

Decisions of the Conference on matters of substance, including decisions as regards the agenda, would be taken by a two-thirds and on matters of procedure by a simple majority.

(b) In the Committee of Ministers decisions would normally be taken by common consent. As an exception, decisions to refer any matter to the Conference for discussion would however, be taken by a two-thirds majority, and decisions on matters of procedure would, if necessary, be taken by a simple majority.

(c) Both the Conference and the Committee of Ministers would have the right to constitute such subsidiary bodies as might seem to them to be desirable.

VI. Commissions

The Conference would be empowered to establish Commissions for the examination and preparation of important questions. Such Commissions would be constituted if need be by the Conference at the end of each ordinary session, and would normally report to the Conference at its next ordinary session.

VII. Finance

The expenses of national delegations will be borne by the Governments concerned.

Common services will be financed by the Participating Powers in a proportion to be established by the Conference.

VIII. Secretariat

The Conference would elect a Secretary-General who would have the right, subject to the agreement of the Conference, to appoint such staff as he might think necessary for the fulfilment of his functions.

IX. Revision

Provision should be made for revision on suitable terms of any instrument setting up a Council of Europe, so as to give effect to any possibilities of greater European Unity that may emerge in the future.

X. Location

The Conference and Committee of Ministers will meet at Strasbourg where also the Secretariat will be situated.