

The establishment of the European Movement

Source: CVCE. European Navigator. Étienne Deschamps.

Copyright: (c) CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_establishment_of_the_european_movement-en-9f2fb553-3a16-43d4-9f6c-892821c957f4.html

Last updated: 08/07/2016



The establishment of and the first steps taken by the European Movement

The International Committee of the Movements for European Unity (ICMEU), which was established in Paris on 11 November 1947 as a follow-up to a Liaison Committee of the Movements for European Unity initially set up four months earlier in Paris to organise and promote a publicity campaign in support of European unity, combined the Union of European Federalists (UEF), led by the Dutch federalist, Henri Brugmans; the United Europe Movement, founded by the former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill; the Independent League for European Cooperation (ILEC), founded by the former Belgian Prime Minister, Paul van Zeeland; the French Council for a United Europe, led by Raoul Dautry, Administrator-General of the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA); the European Parliamentary Union (EPU), founded by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi; and the *Nouvelles Équipes Internationales* (New International Teams — NEI), founded by the French Popular Republican, Robert Bichet.

The ICMEU, chaired by the British Conservative MP, Duncan Sandys, Winston Churchill's son-in-law, and headed by its Secretary-General, Joseph Retinger, immediately established an office in London and a branch in Paris under the supervision of Georges Rebattet. The Committee's tasks involved the organisation, planning and promotion of a united Europe. It was the ICMEU that convened and hosted the Congress of Europe in The Hague in May 1948. With Churchill as its Honorary President, the Congress was attended by some 800 participants (statesmen, MPs, businessmen, trade unionists, academics, etc.) who, specifically selected for the purpose, represented the live forces of the countries of Western Europe. The Congress set itself three very ambitious objectives: to demonstrate the existence, in all free countries of Europe, of a body of public opinion in support of European unity, to discuss the challenges posed by European unity and propose practical solutions to governments and to give new impetus to the international publicity campaign.

Building on the success of the Hague Congress, the International Committee assumed responsibility for implementing the resolutions adopted by the participants in the political, economic and social and cultural fields. Accordingly, an Economic and Social Committee, a Cultural Committee and a Legal Committee were set up. However, it soon became apparent that such a task could no longer be left in the hands of the activist associations alone. Consequently, on 25 October 1948, in Brussels, the ICMEU changed its name to the European Movement. Anxious for its campaign to reach beyond party politics, the European Movement elected the former French Prime Minister, Léon Blum, Winston Churchill, the Italian Prime Minister, Alcide De Gasperi, and the Belgian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, as its Honorary Presidents. Their ranks were soon to be strengthened by the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer.

The European Movement brought together, without merging, the French Council for a United Europe founded by René Courtin, the ILEC — soon to be renamed the European League for Economic Cooperation (ELEC) — founded by Paul van Zeeland, the NEI founded by Robert Bichet, the UEF founded by Henri Brugmans and the United Europe Movement founded by Duncan Sandys and Winston Churchill. Other movements subsequently joined, such as the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe (MSEUE), the European Parliamentary Union (EPU), the Centre for European Federalist Action (AEF), the European Association of Teachers (AEDE), the Liberal Movement for a United Europe (MLEU), the Association of European Journalists (AEJ) and the Union of Resistance Fighters for a United Europe (URPE). The European Movement was led by an Executive Committee and an International Committee that, in turn, was supported by national councils in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, West Germany and the United Kingdom. Its Secretary-General was the Frenchman, Georges Rebattet, with André Philip and Joseph Retinger both serving as general representatives. A committee of Spanish exiles was set up. Having been based for a time in London and then in Paris, the International Secretariat of the European Movement found a permanent home in Brussels in 1951.

The European Movement soon adopted a flag bearing a large green E on a white background. It received funding mainly in the form of member subscriptions and government subsidies, and, as from March 1949, it also enjoyed the financial backing of the American Committee on United Europe founded by General William J. Donovan. Encouraged by Joseph Retinger, who was of Polish origin, the European Movement set

up, in London in late 1949, a Committee on Central and Eastern European Countries which consisted of various leaders of the Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian and Yugoslav diaspora. Its Chairman was the British Conservative MP, Harold Macmillan, who frequently emphasised the need for complementarity between Eastern and Western Europe and denounced the lack of freedom endured by the inhabitants of countries under the Soviet yoke. One year later, on 28 August 1950, the Council of Europe established a special committee responsible for safeguarding the interests of those nations that were not represented. In January 1952, in London, the European Movement held a conference of the countries of Eastern Europe.

From the outset, the European Movement focused its efforts on the convening of a European Assembly. As early as 18 August 1948, the ICMEU had submitted to all European governments proposals that had, to a great extent, been developed by the former French Prime Minister, Paul Ramadier, who had been Chairman of the Political Committee in The Hague. Less ambitious than the Resolution of the Hague Congress, Ramadier's plan called for the establishment of an Assembly with a strictly deliberative and consultative role. On 23 November, the European Movement stepped in and submitted to the intergovernmental Committee for the Study of European Unity established in Paris by the five Brussels Treaty Powers a new memorandum that set out detailed recommendations for the tasks and composition of a European Consultative Assembly and a European Council of Ministers. On 9 December, a Delegation of the European Movement was received at the Quai d'Orsay by the Sub-Committee of the Committee for the Study of European Unity, entrusted with the task of reviewing the various proposals which had been submitted to it, in order to expand orally on the proposals put forward two weeks earlier in the memorandum. From 25 to 28 February 1949, in Brussels, the first political Congress of the European Movement focused on the establishment of the future European Assembly and of a European Political Authority. However, as was the case at the Hague Congress, the debates were influenced by the ideological opposition between the unionists, who were in favour of simple intergovernmental cooperation, and the federalists, who sought to build a European federation on a supranational basis by engaging, as far as possible, the live forces of civil society. Drawn up as a compromise, the recommendation adopted in Brussels urged that, although delegates to the European Assembly should most certainly be appointed by the national parliaments, this should, nevertheless, allow for a certain amount of extra-parliamentary representation. A draft European Charter on Human Rights was also drawn up listing the individual, family and social rights to be guaranteed and protected in law by a European Court. The Statute of the Council of Europe, a somewhat toned-down version of the proposals and recommendations put forward by the European Movement, was signed in London on 5 May 1949.

In April 1949, the European Movement held an Economic Conference in Westminster. Participants at the Conference included leading economists, MPs and also employer and trade union representatives. Once again, discussions revealed differences of opinion between, on the one hand, a British majority and supporters of sovereignty who were in favour of establishing a free-trade area in Western Europe and, on the other, a significant number of participants from Continental Europe who were calling for States to surrender a large part of their sovereignty and were advocating the establishment of an economic and customs union. Some federalists, proponents of the ideology of Proudhon and integral theories, went so far as to recommend the restructuring of the inner workings of European States through the devolution of powers and through economic and cultural decentralisation. Efforts also had to be made to strike a balance between Socialist and Liberal theories. However, in monetary affairs, especially in the area of free currency convertibility, concessions made on all sides made it possible to devise a programme that laid the foundations for what was to become, in 1950, the European Payments Union (EPU). A recommendation was also made for the establishment of a European Economic and Social Committee consisting of representatives of all economic and social activities. In conclusion, the Conference called for the removal of barriers to tourism and consultation with the governments of the colonial powers on all issues relating to the overseas countries and territories.

In July 1950, in Rome, the European Movement held a Social Conference to discuss what should be the main thrust of European social policy. However, there were strong differences of opinion between the representatives of countries with a high unemployment rate and those with low unemployment, as well as between trade union and employer representatives in such areas as the participation of trade unions in the

management of undertakings or the harmonisation of social security systems in Europe. The idea of establishing a European Economic and Social Committee was raised again. The participants also proposed the establishment of a European Commissariat for Labour and a European fund for reconstruction and development.

To ensure that its views were heard, the International European Movement ran a publicity campaign that was aimed at political, economic, social and cultural leaders. The Movement had not overlooked the general public. It held public debates and funded a great many publications, including the monthly journal *Nouvelles de l'Europe*. Therefore, despite experiencing ideological, human and material difficulties, in the early 1950s, the European Movement constituted a tremendous moral force that enabled the European idea to move on to the next stage of initial practical achievements.