

## The Congress of Europe in The Hague (7–10 May 1948) — Foreword

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## Foreword

The digital corpus entitled ‘The Congress of Europe in The Hague’, compiled to mark the 60th anniversary of the Congress of Europe held in May 1948, offers a comprehensive series of resources that outline the origins, the proceedings and the impact of the Hague Congress. It is the result of an ambitious research project carried out by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe (CVCE) in partnership with the ‘Identities, International Relations and Civilisations of Europe’ (IRICE) Mixed Research Unit (UMR No 8138) and, in particular, with Jean-Michel Guieu, Assistant Professor at the University of Paris I–Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Over 350 documents included in this corpus, covering subjects that range from the first steps taken by groups of activists during the immediate post-war period and their efforts towards European unity to the establishment of the European Movement in October 1948, recreate this key event in the history of European integration.

Documents from the European Movement, stored in Florence by the Historical Archives of the European Union, form the main primary sources for this corpus. This material provides day-by-day coverage of all the preparations for the Congress carried out by the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity in close liaison with each of the national committees. These archives refer to the economic, political and cultural implications of the Congress and demonstrate the practical difficulties involved, in the early days of the Cold War, in organising a meeting attended by more than 800 delegates from most countries in Europe. The archives also provide information on the practical steps taken by the participants in the Congress with regard to the resolutions adopted in The Hague in support of a united Europe.

The collation of material has also demonstrated the value of acquiring documents — most of which are previously unpublished — from other archives, such as the Archives of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, those of the European Movement International (EMI) in Brussels, the private papers of Paul Ramadier held in the Departmental Archives in Rodez, Aveyron, and the personal files of Ronald Mackay at the London School of Economics. These archives have proved particularly useful in illustrating the tensions in the late 1940s between federalist militants and ‘unionists’, who advocated an intergovernmental Europe. They also enable users to follow the debates on the establishment of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

It has fortunately proved possible to supplement the corpus with accounts provided by Jean-Pierre Gouzy, Guy Gervais de Rouville and Charles Rutten, who all attended the Hague Congress. As well as these exclusive interviews conducted by the CVCE, a selection of original audio and video clips provide an opportunity to absorb the enthusiastic atmosphere that characterised the event in The Hague and turned it into a popular success.

The corpus, which is primarily geared towards the research community, provides access to a wide range of varied documentary resources including press articles, extracts from memoirs, photos and cartoons. It is introduced by a chronology and a selective bibliography on the subject, and each themed section of resources in the corpus is introduced by an explanatory text written by Étienne Deschamps, former Researcher at the CVCE.

The corpus was first published as a ‘Special File’ in European NAVigator in May 2008.

An International History Conference held on 15, 16 and 17 May 2008 at the University of Paris I–Panthéon-Sorbonne, organised jointly with the Maison de l’Europe in Paris, served to enrich the corpus, with the contribution of young historians who came from all over Europe to compare the results of their research. It also enabled the CVCE to explain the philosophy behind the corpus to historians of European integration and to show them some of the content. The European Movement International then organised a major public event on 23–24 May 2008 in The Hague to mark the 60th anniversary of the May 1948 Congress of Europe. This was attended by hundreds of European citizens and numerous EU political leaders, and demonstrated the current relevance of some of the political, economic and cultural plans dating from 1948. This major

event afforded the CVCE a further opportunity to present the results of its research work, at the very same site that witnessed the first Congress in 1948.