

Plans for revival

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Plans for revival

From the autumn of 1954, following the rejection of the European Defence Community (EDC) by the French Parliament, some Benelux leaders set about reviving a Community plan that provided solutions to the specific problems of economic integration. Still shocked by the failure of the EDC, they refused to let European unification get bogged down.

As early as 5 May 1953, [Johan Willem Beyen](#), Dutch Foreign Minister, had sent a [letter](#) to his counterparts in the Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in which he set out a framework for the establishment of general economic integration, rather than sector-based integration, with the aim of progressively developing a true common market in Europe.

Various independent experts, international bodies and pro-European movements came forward with proposals for reviving sectoral integration by pooling the energy and transport sectors. However, numerous technical and economic problems arose before it became possible to bring these plans to fruition.

- [Demonstration in favour of the Customs Union \(Liège, May 1953\)](#)

In early 1955, the French Government was considered at the very least to be discredited by the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC), so Jean Monnet avoided informing it of his plan for a European Atomic Energy Community. He contacted Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak with a view to coordinating plans for a revival of the European project, suggesting that he shoulder political responsibility for the initiative. The Netherlands Foreign Minister, Johan Willem Beyen, and his Luxembourg counterpart, Joseph Bech, were immediately in favour of the plan presented to them by Spaak.

On 18 May 1955, the three Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) adopted a joint [memorandum](#), which they sent to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), France and Italy two days later. This memorandum set out a plan for reviving European integration by extending the responsibilities of the ECSC in the areas of transport, energy and nuclear energy, and in the economic, social and financial fields. It was examined and discussed on 1, 2 and 3 July 1955 at the conference of Foreign Ministers of the six ECSC countries held in Messina.

- [‘Benelux proposals for a revival of European integration’ from Le Soir \(20 May 1955\)](#)

It was at this conference that the European integration process was brought firmly back on course.