

## The signing of the treaty

In London, on 5 May 1949, ten states signed the Statute of the Council of Europe: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. It was the very first international parliamentary assembly. The first representatives were appointed by their national parliaments or by their governments. At the ceremony held to mark the signing of the Statute, Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, gave the inaugural address and spoke of the new hope this institution had given to the peoples of Europe.

The Council had its permanent seat in Strasbourg, a city that had long been fought over by Germany and France. The choice of Strasbourg was based on a proposal by Ernest Bevin: having been at the centre of conflicts between France and Germany for many centuries, the capital of Alsace could now become the symbolic home of European reconciliation.

This decision was confirmed by Article 11 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. Moreover, a Special Agreement relating to the Seat of the Council of Europe, signed in Paris on 2 September 1949 by the Council of Europe and the Government of the French Republic, asserts the 'inviolability' of the buildings and premises of the Council.

Greece and Turkey joined the new organisation on 9 August 1949, Iceland in 1950, and the Federal Republic of Germany became a full member on 2 May 1951. Over the years, many other countries have joined the Council of Europe.