

## The first organisations and cooperative ventures in post-war Europe — Full version

**Source:** CVCE.

**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\\_first\\_organisations\\_and\\_cooperative\\_ventures\\_in\\_post\\_war\\_europe\\_full\\_version-en-94f88532-d2f2-4e58-a552-7f7c62306ebb.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_first_organisations_and_cooperative_ventures_in_post_war_europe_full_version-en-94f88532-d2f2-4e58-a552-7f7c62306ebb.html)

**Last updated:** 07/07/2016



# The first organisations and cooperative ventures in post-war Europe — Full version

## Contents

Introduction

I. The OEEC and the EPU

II. The Council of Europe

A. The origins of the Council of Europe

B. The signing of the treaty

C. The bodies of the Council of Europe

1. The Committee of Ministers

2. The Consultative Assembly

3. The Secretariat

D. The Council of Europe — a testing ground for ideas

E. The establishment of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights

III. Benelux

IV. Western Union

V. NATO

VI. The European Organisation for Nuclear Research

VII. Economic cooperation

A. The Tripartite Council for Economic Cooperation

B. Customs union projects

C. The European Coal Organisation

D. The Economic Commission for Europe

## Introduction

At the end of World War II, a series of diplomatic initiatives were taken in an attempt to rebuild the economies of Europe left devastated by five years of conflict. In addition to the urgent need for the bare essentials such as coal and steel, the aim was to revive economic activity and to promote trade and the modernisation of production structures, either via monetary agreements (such as the EPU), by means of regional measures for dismantling customs barriers (Benelux, Fritalux, Finebel) or the establishment of organisations for economic cooperation (the Tripartite Council for Economic Cooperation, the European Coal Organisation, the Economic Commission for Europe, etc.).

The countries of Western Europe decided to take their fate into their own hands and tentatively explored new forms of sectoral cooperation that might lead to greater things. On 16 April 1948, in Paris, the representatives of the 16 European states that had accepted US economic and financial aid under the Marshall Plan signed the Convention establishing the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC).

European cooperation also took on a political dimension. The idea of convening a European assembly first arose at the Congress of Europe in The Hague on from 7 to 10 May 1948, organised by the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity. The Congress closed with the participants adopting a political resolution calling for the convening of a European assembly, the drafting of a charter of human rights and the setting up of a court of justice responsible for ensuring compliance with that charter. On 5 May 1949, at St James's Palace, London, the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty establishing the Council of Europe. The central aim assigned to the Council of Europe was an ambitious one, namely 'to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress'.

The countries of Europe also pursued military cooperation. The establishment of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the massive presence of Soviet troops in those countries, gave rise to a feeling of apprehension in Western Europe. The French and British Governments reacted and were soon joined by the governments of the Benelux countries. On 17 March 1948, the Brussels Treaty establishing Western Union was signed, marking the start of European military cooperation. The creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on 4 April 1949 was a further step towards more effective military cooperation between Europe and the United States.

Alongside European economic, political and military cooperation, scientists in Europe in the post-war period called for a revival of university exchanges between countries and for the setting up of research programmes which were often too sophisticated and too costly for national laboratories acting on their own. A further aim was to achieve levels of technological and nuclear advancement comparable to those of the United States and the Soviet Union.

The pioneering period, when everything still seemed possible, was also the period when some impulsive ideas, bearing the imprint of hastiness or utopianism, fell victim to events or to the inertia of governments. It was followed by a period when more tangible achievements were able to take shape. Recourse to consensus and intergovernmental methods in the immediate post-war period gave way to initiatives of a kind that placed hope in a supranational approach.

The fledgling European Community, born of the Schuman Plan of 9 May 1950, took its first steps and began to acquire organisational shape. The establishment of the European Community is covered in detail in the research corpus '[From the Schuman Plan to the Paris Treaty \(1950–1952\)](#)'.

## **I. The OEEC and the EPU**

At the end of the Second World War, the United Nations (UN), whose founding Charter was signed in San Francisco in June 1945, provided aid in various ways to the European countries ruined by the war. Europe was facing serious food shortages and was obliged to keep rationing systems in place after the war. But this programme was haphazard and would not have much impact on the economy of the countries of Europe. Intra-European trade was hindered by a lack of foreign exchange and required an international authority capable of effectively organising trade worldwide. The United States, whose interests lay in promoting such trade in order to increase its own exports, decided to help the European economy via a large-scale structural recovery programme. The United States wanted to protect American prosperity and stave off the threat of national overproduction. But the United States' desire to give Europe massive economic aid was also politically motivated. The fear of communist expansion in Western Europe during the Cold War was undoubtedly a decisive factor, as important as the conquest of new markets. The Americans therefore decided to fight poverty and hunger in Europe, factors which, they felt, encouraged the spread of communism.

In a speech made on 5 June 1947 at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the US Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, proposed the granting of economic and financial assistance to all the countries of Europe, subject to closer European cooperation. This was the Marshall Plan or the European Recovery Program (ERP). Ultimately, 16 countries signed up to the Marshall Plan: Austria, Belgium, Denmark (with the Faroe Islands and Greenland), France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy (and San Marino), Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal (with Madeira and the Azores), Sweden, Switzerland (with Liechtenstein), Turkey and the United Kingdom. They immediately set up a Committee of European Economic Cooperation (CEEC) which drew up a report establishing the priorities for the European economy. But the Americans insisted that these countries should control the management and distribution of the funds themselves. The CEEC therefore set up a permanent agency for this purpose.

On 16 April 1948, in Paris, the 16 countries signed a Convention to establish the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). West Germany and the territory of Trieste joined in 1949. The colonies and overseas territories of the OEEC countries were represented by their parent state, and the United States and Canada, even though they did not belong to the Organisation, were also involved in its work. The OEEC was therefore a de facto worldwide organisation.

In 1948, the OEEC negotiated a multilateral agreement on intra-European payments. That was followed, in 1949, by a trade liberalisation scheme. From July 1950 to December 1958, a European Payments Union (EPU) restored the convertibility of European currencies and removed quantitative trade restrictions. The OEEC also promoted economic productivity in Europe via the European Agency for Productivity that it set up in 1953 to study and disseminate technical advances in the industrial sector. As an initial umbrella organisation for European democratic countries with a free market economy, the OEEC was in fact an

important forerunner of a united Europe. It remained, however, an organisation for intergovernmental cooperation that was unable to create a customs union.

In 1960, when the United States and Canada joined, it became the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which later expanded even further.

European cooperation went beyond the economic field; it also encompassed monetary matters. After the end of the Second World War, bilateral payments agreements were signed between various European countries with the aim of reviving international trade. But these initial agreements were founded on exchange-rate controls, which meant that authorised payments had to be made in accordance with fixed rates that matched the official value of the currencies. In addition, trade and payments had to be balanced within the credit limits set by these agreements. That led to the decision taken in July 1950 by the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) to replace these bilateral payment agreements by a multilateral system capable of revitalising the European economy.

The European Payments Union (EPU) was created on 19 September 1950 by the 18 members of the OEEC and entered into force, retrospectively, on 1 July 1950. The EPU facilitated the convertibility of European currencies by setting exchange rates that were deemed to reflect the reality of each country's economic situation. On the other hand, currency restrictions were maintained vis-à-vis the dollar area. It therefore acted as an international clearing house, helping to compensate and balance the accounts of each European country with those of its neighbours. In practice, each EPU member set a parity between its currency and the unit of account, which was fixed in grams of gold based on the gold value of the dollar, as well as a single exchange rate. At the end of each month, settlement of trade was carried out partly in gold and partly via the granting of credits to the EPU. The EPU's initial capital, subscribed by the United States, was used to settle with the creditors as soon as the debtors made their payments. Thanks to this system, the national central banks also made their currency available to their partners, while the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel managed the settlement transactions. Every month, the EPU calculated a net credit or debit balance for each country in relation to all the other countries in the Union. A quota was set for each member that represented the maximum that its account balance could attain. Adjustments, partially calculated in gold, were made depending on the monthly credit or debit balance of the country in question. Once the EPU's exchange mechanism had been shown to work, it was gradually made more flexible by the introduction of a bank arbitrage procedure, greater flexibility in intra-European payment arrangements and the decentralisation of these arrangements, to the benefit of the markets.

In the post-war period, the EPU helped to secure complete stability of exchange rates and to promote free trade among its Member States. But the EPU fell victim to a series of crises caused by opponents objecting to price fluctuations and to the convertibility of European currencies between issuing banks but not between individuals. Finally, the EPU, which had advocated a return to full currency convertibility in Europe but which some feared would compete with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), was wound up on 27 December 1958 and replaced on the same day by the European Monetary Agreement (EMA), which called for a collective return to monetary convertibility in Europe.

The EMA was signed by the 17 Member States of the EPU on 5 August 1955, thereby creating a European reserve fund for those countries whose balance of payments showed a deficit and a multilateral settlement and equalisation system founded on exchange rates,

which were kept as stable as possible. The Bank for International Settlements managed the financial transactions resulting from the EMA, but unlike the EPU, the EMA's system of multilateral settlements and granting of loans was neither compulsory nor automatic.

## II. The Council of Europe

At the end of the Second World War, several ideas began to take shape for the creation of joint, effective political institutions. Western Europe soon realised that its recovery would come through unity. At the Hague Congress in May 1948, European federalists called for the rapid creation of a structure for political cooperation. The United States, which was already giving financial backing to the free countries of Europe, also promoted the idea of political cooperation among the democracies of Western Europe, which might include the future Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

In August 1948, Paul Ramadier, acting on a mandate from the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, submitted to the governments of the 16 member countries of the fledgling Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) a plan for a European Assembly that would be the linchpin of a future European union.

France and the Benelux countries proposed the creation of an independent assembly and envisaged the transfer of some national sovereignty to a decision-making body. In so doing, they sought to demonstrate their good intentions to pro-Europeans and to respond to American appeals to resolve the German question. While Guy Mollet readily called for a Federal European Parliament, the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries preferred the idea of close intergovernmental cooperation. The European Parliamentary Union and the European Movement also put forward their views. A compromise was finally reached between British and Continental interests. The governments of the European states agreed to appoint a body comprising a Consultative Assembly and a Committee of Ministers, which would take decisions unanimously and would have the final say.

In London, on 5 May 1949, ten states signed the Statute of the Council of Europe: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden. It was the very first international parliamentary assembly. The first representatives were appointed by their national parliaments or by their governments. The Council had its permanent seat in Strasbourg, a city that had long been fought over by Germany and France.

According to the Preamble, the aim of its members is the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international cooperation, the safeguarding of the principles of freedom, democracy and the rule of law and the promotion of social and economic progress.

Article 1 of the Council of Europe statutes clearly sets out the mission of the organisation which 'is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress'.

## A. The origins of the Council of Europe

Founded in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Council of Europe is Europe's oldest political organisation.

The idea of convening a European assembly first arose at the Congress of Europe, held in The Hague on 10 May 1948 by the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity. In the years immediately following the Second World War, many pro-European movements actively promoted the establishment of an organisation that would prevent a return to totalitarian regimes and would defend fundamental freedoms, peace and democracy.

The Congress closed with the participants adopting a political resolution calling for the convening of a European assembly, the drafting of a charter of human rights and the setting up of a court of justice responsible for ensuring compliance with that charter.

The United States, which was already giving financial backing to the free countries of Europe, also promoted the idea of political cooperation among the democracies of Western Europe, which might include the future Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

In July 1948, the French Government took up the idea launched at the Hague Congress and proposed the establishment of a European assembly. But the British Government was doubtful and asked for more detailed information on how exactly such an assembly was to be convened. In order to clarify the matter, the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity drew up specific proposals and presented them to the governments concerned on 18 August 1948 in the form of a memorandum.

The French Government approved the proposals set out in the August 1948 memorandum and, supported by the Belgian Government, referred the plan to the Standing Committee of the Treaty of Brussels on 2 September 1948. Consequently, France and Belgium submitted proposals to the other signatory states to the Treaty of Brussels (Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) for the setting up of a European assembly which would have a consultative role and be responsible for representing the views of the European public. The assembly would consist of representatives appointed by the various national parliaments and would adopt resolutions by a majority of votes cast.

However, the British rejected the idea of an international institution whose members were not appointed by their governments. They envisaged the establishment of a ministerial committee whose composition would vary according to the issues to be addressed and which would be accompanied by parliamentary delegations and other experts.

On 26 October 1948, in order to reconcile both positions, the Consultative Council of the Brussels Treaty decided to establish a Committee for the Study of European Unity, chaired by Édouard Herriot, which met in Paris from November 1948 to January 1949. On 15 December 1948, the Committee entrusted the task to a sub-committee, which then submitted a draft constituent text for a European union.

On 18 January 1949, however, the British Government, which was still lukewarm about the plan, submitted a new proposal. No agreement had been reached when the Committee's work came to an end two days later. Finally, on 27 and 28 January 1949, the Foreign Ministers of the five Brussels Treaty countries reached a compromise at a meeting of the Consultative



Council of the Brussels Treaty. This involved the establishment of a ministerial committee endowed with the power to take decisions and of a consultative assembly whose members were to be appointed in accordance with their own government's procedures, as had been requested by the United Kingdom.

The five Brussels Treaty countries then invited Ireland, Italy, Denmark, Norway and Sweden to attend the Conference on the establishment of a Council of Europe, held at St James's Palace in London from 3 to 5 May 1949.

Following its signature on 5 May, the organisation's Statute entered into force on 3 August 1949, the date on which Luxembourg deposited the seventh instrument of ratification with the British Government.

### **B. 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.

### **C. The bodies of the Council of Europe**

From the outset, the Council of Europe had three statutory bodies: the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly, both political bodies, were assisted by the Secretariat, a purely administrative body. The structure and the powers and responsibilities of the Council of Europe are the result of a compromise between those who favoured a federalist model of European integration and the unionists, who, seeking not to interfere with state sovereignty, preferred no more than intergovernmental cooperation.



## 1. The Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers is the Council of Europe's decision-making body and has the power to act on behalf of the organisation. It adopts its internal rules of procedure which lay down the statutory rules relating to its internal organisation and operation. The first meeting of the Committee of Ministers was held on 8 August 1949 at Strasbourg Town Hall. This session was opened by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman.

According to the Statute, each Council of Europe member state has a representative on the Committee of Ministers, and each representative has one vote. Representatives on the Committee are the Foreign Affairs Ministers or their Deputies. According to the Rules of Procedure, each representative appoints a Deputy to act on his or her behalf when the Committee is not in session.

The internal Rules of Procedure provide for the holding of sessions by the Committee not only in the days immediately preceding and following the opening of the Assembly sessions but also if any of the members so request or if the Secretary General deems it necessary, and if two thirds of the members agree to this. In practice, the Committee holds sessions at Foreign Minister level twice a year, in May and November. The Deputies meet once a week for the purpose of transacting business and for the taking of decisions on behalf of the Committee. They also meet several times a week in committees and in rapporteur and working groups.

The chairmanship of each session of the Committee of Ministers is held, in turn, by each member state in English alphabetical order. The Chairman, who is responsible for leading the debates, speaks and votes but has no casting vote. When the Committee is not in session, the Chairman remains in office until the opening of the next session.

With regard to the Committee's powers and responsibilities, Article 15 of the Statute states that it has a duty, on the recommendation of the Assembly or on its own initiative, to consider the action required to further the aim of the Council of Europe, including the conclusion of conventions and agreements and the adoption by governments of a common policy on specific matters. It may discuss any issues (human rights, democracy, European integration, etc.) except for defence matters. Its conclusions may take the form of recommendations to governments, and it then monitors the action taken by those governments.

The Committee is also the body which takes binding decisions on all matters relating to the internal organisation and arrangements of the Council of Europe and, for this purpose, it adopts such financial and administrative arrangements as may be necessary.

With regard to the Committee's voting procedures, the adoption of any resolutions relating to important matters, including recommendations to governments, requires unanimity. All other resolutions require a two-thirds majority, with the exception of matters relating to the Rules of Procedure or to financial or administrative regulations which may be adopted by a simple majority. A quorum is established when two thirds of the representatives of the members are present.

Apart from recommendations to governments and decisions which are the subject of conventions and agreements, the Committee of Ministers also adopts resolutions on matters regarding the Council of Europe's internal organisation and on political issues, declarations

on topical issues and replies to recommendations made by the Assembly.

Since, in practice, the rule of unanimity applies, and because of the Committee's strictly intergovernmental nature, the body's decision-making powers have proved to be limited.

## **2. The Consultative Assembly**

The Consultative Assembly, now known as Parliamentary Assembly, was created as one of the two statutory organs of the Council of Europe and to serve as its deliberative body. On 10 August 1949, the Consultative Assembly, provisionally chaired by Édouard Herriot, met for the first time in the auditorium of the University of Strasbourg. The following day, the Belgian Socialist delegate and former Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, was elected President of the Assembly.

The Assembly discusses any matter relating to the aim of the Council of Europe and falling within its remit, as well as any matters referred to it by the Committee of Ministers. The conclusions that it forwards to the Committee take the form of recommendations in the first instance and of opinions in the second. Its recommendations and opinions are on no account binding.

In addition to its consultative powers, the Assembly also has a number of powers to elect the bodies of the Council of Europe; this strengthens its parliamentary role within the organisation. It elects the Council of Europe's Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, the Clerk of the Assembly, the Judges at the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights.

The first version of Article 25 of the Statute, according to which the Consultative Assembly consists of representatives appointed by each member in accordance with the procedure adopted by each government, was amended in May 1951. Since then, each member state's representative in the Assembly is either elected by that member's national parliament or appointed from among its members of parliament.

Each member state has between 2 and 18 representatives in the Assembly, depending on the size of its population. Each representative, if absent, may have a substitute who may sit, speak and vote on his or her behalf.

The total number of representatives in 1949 was 87.

The Assembly may be convened by the Committee of Ministers for an extraordinary session. The Assembly adopts its internal Rules of Procedure. It elects its President from among its members. In accordance with the Statute, the President remains in office until the following ordinary session. In practise, the President serves for three sessions.

According to the Assembly's internal Rules of Procedure, the representatives and substitutes appointed by the national parliaments of each member state together form national delegations. They may also form political groups, which must consist of at least 20 members and include representatives and substitutes from at least six national delegations. Members of the Assembly, however, sit in the Chamber not according to membership of a national delegation or a political group but in alphabetical order.

On 10 and 11 December 1951, the proposal to turn the Consultative Assembly into a constituent assembly failed and led to the resignation of its Belgian President, Paul-Henri Spaak. Since 1949, there has been fierce disagreement between supporters of a strong federal Europe with a powerful Assembly and governments anxious to preserve their national sovereignty.

### 3. The Secretariat

Consisting of a Secretary General, a Deputy Secretary General and the necessary staff, the body that assists the Committee and the Assembly has become more than a mere administrative support structure. Its technical, coordinating and consultative skills quickly ensured that it played an important role as a body for providing suggestions and guidance.

The Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General are appointed by the Consultative Assembly on a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers. The other members of the Secretariat are appointed by the Secretary General in accordance with the administrative Rules of Procedure.

French politician Jacques Camille Paris became the first Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 11 August 1949.

The tasks entrusted to the Secretary General include the following:

- liaising between the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly and providing them with the necessary staff and administrative resources;
- attending meetings of the Committee of Ministers and taking part in debates in an advisory capacity;
- establishing a list of the decisions taken by the Committee and ensuring that it is distributed to all the members;
- preparing reports on the Committee's activities, which are then forwarded, accompanied by the relevant background documents, to the members of both the Committee and the Assembly at the opening of their respective sessions;
- drawing up reports when requested to do so by the Committee;
- since the adoption by the Committee of Resolution (57) 26 on 13 December 1957, drawing up an annual report on political cooperation in preparation for the Assembly's spring session;
- submitting a draft budget to the Committee and drawing up an annual report on the Secretariat's activities;
- notifying states of any decisions taken by the Committee concerning their status within the organisation (invitations to become members, suspensions or expulsions) and receiving notification from states (of withdrawal);
- signing agreements on the organisation's behalf, in accordance with the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe which confirms that the organisation possesses legal personality and has the capacity to conclude contracts, to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property and to institute legal proceedings;
- since the adoption by the Committee of the Statutory Resolution of May 1951, incorporated into the revised Statute, submitting conventions and agreements to states for ratification and acting as the Depository of the instruments of ratification.

In addition to providing secretariats for the statutory bodies, the General Secretariat is also responsible for providing secretariats for subsidiary bodies such as the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights.

#### **D. The Council of Europe — a testing ground for ideas**

The Council of Europe sought to achieve greater unity among its member states, to maintain the democratic ideals and principles that are their common heritage and to promote economic and social progress. However, the Council of Europe was not authorised to debate defence issues, although in 1951, shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War, the Assembly did debate questions relating to security.

In the opinion of Robert Schuman, who had to make considerable concessions to the British negotiators, the Council of Europe was first and foremost a testing ground for ideas. Paul-Henri Spaak was the first President of the Assembly, whose members also included the most eminent political personalities in Western Europe. The institution raised the hopes of many, and in 1951 it served as a model for the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The various visions of a united Europe were discussed in the Assembly very openly because its representatives were not tied by electoral concerns in their home countries or by partisan voting instructions. The Council of Europe could be described as a forum for dialogue, for cooperation and for drafting framework texts on matters concerning the European identity.

The Assembly of the Council of Europe did not hesitate in unveiling various plans for the unification of Europe. Some of the major points under discussion included pools for European transport, public health and agricultural production, as well as a European common market project and an economic cooperation programme between the member states and their overseas territories. The Assembly also came up with proposals for a federal political authority. But none of these recommendations was successful, because the Assembly did not manage to secure a majority of its members in support of such ambitious texts, which, in any event, had scant chance of gaining the support of the Committee of Ministers.

Nevertheless, the Council of Europe played a significant role in support of cultural, social and scientific cooperation. It drew up international conventions in fields as varied as university cooperation and the recognition of periods of study and diplomas, language study, the protection and promotion of artistic and archaeological heritage, the translation and dissemination of European works of literature, the harmonisation of social security systems, the fight against unemployment, uniform passports, etc.

The European Political Community (EPC) plan was drawn up between September 1952 and March 1953 by the Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The EPC raised the issue of the future of the Council of Europe, a body about which the federalists were less than enthusiastic because it lacked political muscle.

The United Kingdom, while determined not to be pushed by the six ECSC Member States along the road to a federal Europe, tried nevertheless to secure for itself a position from which

it could influence, more or less directly, the course of events. It seized the opportunity to present to its European partners a raft of institutional reforms designed to associate the Council of Europe with the Schuman Plan and the European army project.

But that move by the UK authorities was also meant to thwart the initiatives taken in 1950 and 1951 by the Strasbourg Consultative Assembly to reform the Council of Europe's Statute and move it in the direction of a genuine European political authority. On 23 December 1950, the Assembly adopted a Protocol providing for the conversion of the Council of Europe into a European legislative and executive body. One year later, on 11 December 1951, the Consultative Assembly unanimously adopted a new draft Statute calling for the incorporation into the Council of Europe of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the cultural and social bodies of the Brussels Treaty. However, these projects were deemed too ambitious and were rejected by the Committee of Ministers.

The British rejoinder came without delay. On 19 March 1952, the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, submitted to his counterparts on the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers a plan under which the Council of Europe would confer political authority on the ECSC and on the European Defence Community (EDC) being negotiated by the six ECSC Member States. The British Government, opposed to the proliferation of European bodies, explained that it wanted to turn the Council of Europe into a dynamic institution and a structure within which present and future Community institutions could be included. According to Eden, this novel 'dual link' or 'twin plan' system would enable the Council of Europe to continue functioning as a forum for intergovernmental cooperation for those states that were not part of the Schuman Plan and, at the same time, allow the six ECSC Member States to pursue their efforts towards integration without having to create new supranational institutions.

Although it was spelled out once more in another memorandum that was submitted on 28 April 1952 to the delegates representing the 15 member states of the Council of Europe, the Eden Plan resulted in no more than the application of a few specific and logistical measures.

### **E. The establishment of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights**

On 4 November 1950, in Rome, the representatives of the Member States of the Council of Europe signed the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which was inspired by the work of the pro-European movements that attended the Congress of Europe in The Hague in May 1948.

In July 1949, the European Movement submitted a draft convention to the Council of Europe and in August 1949, at its first session, the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a Resolution on Human Rights that was quickly taken up by the Committee of Ministers and the national governments. Chaired by the British Conservative MP Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, co-rapporteur for the European Movement's Legal Committee and an active member of the Cultural Committee of the Congress of Europe in The Hague, the Committee on Legal and Administrative Questions of the Council of Europe adopted as the basis for its work the preliminary draft convention drawn up by former French Minister Pierre-Henri Teitgen, who was Chairman of the European Movement's Legal Committee. This document sought to resolve three issues:

- to list and define the rights and freedoms to be guaranteed;
- to specify the method for laying down the conditions for the exercise of these rights and freedoms;
- to specify the mechanism for the collective enforcement of these rights.

As far as the first issue was concerned, the Consultative Assembly believed that only the fundamental rights of political democracy could be guaranteed, whilst social rights would have to be dealt with at a later stage. Consequently, it approved the Committee's choice of the ten rights and freedoms derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted in December 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. However, owing to a failure to reach agreement on the definition of the right to property and the right of parents to exercise a preference for the type of education that they may choose for their children, the Consultative Assembly decided to refer the paragraphs relating to these two rights to the Committee and to assign to it the task of drafting a more precise definition in time for the next session. The preliminary draft also provided for governments to undertake to hold, at reasonable intervals, at the very least in the home country of some of them, elections by universal suffrage in a free and secret ballot and to allow political criticism and opposition.

With regard to its next task of laying down the conditions for the exercise of these rights and freedoms, the Consultative Assembly established the principle according to which each member state would be responsible for making arrangements, within its own borders, for the exercise of the freedoms guaranteed by the Convention. Lastly, the Assembly unanimously acknowledged the need for a system of judicial review and recommended the establishment of a European Court of Human Rights, even though it specified that states would also be entitled to submit their disputes to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. A recommendation was made for the setting up of a European Commission of Human Rights, an investigative and conciliation body.

During debates held by the Consultative Assembly on the subject of human rights, the Belgian Catholic Senator Étienne de la Vallée Poussin, a member of the EPU, raised the issue of displaced persons. However, discussion on the subject was postponed indefinitely. But the efforts of the Council of Europe soon brought results.

Following the call at the Hague Congress in May 1948 for the establishment of a charter for human rights and a court of justice to enforce it, on 4 November 1950 in Rome the Foreign Ministers of 12 member states of the Council of Europe signed the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, or European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR entered into force on 3 September 1953, the date on which Luxembourg deposited the tenth instrument of ratification with the Council of Europe's Secretary General. Since its entry into force, through binding judicial procedures, it has protected the civil and political rights of individuals, including human rights (right to life, prohibition of torture, etc.), citizens' rights (freedom of thought, of expression, of association, etc.) and applicants' rights (right to a fair trial, no punishment without law, etc.).

Unlike conventional international treaties, which are based on the principle of reciprocity between contracting states, the Convention establishes objective obligations for states towards individuals, irrespective of the conduct of cosignatory states. This, in fact, is the ECHR's unique innovation: the full range of its common and foremost values are set out and enshrined in positive law through a system that provides collective safeguards and can be petitioned by



both states and individuals.

The Convention thus institutes a mandatory ‘international public order’ from which the states party to the Convention cannot derogate in the adoption and application of domestic legal standards. This does not infringe upon states’ national autonomy regarding their assessment of the Convention’s provisions. Indeed, the subsidiarity principle, which states that, in the first instance, it is the duty of states to ensure that human rights are respected at national level, operates in practice under the rule on the exhaustion of local remedies.

In keeping with the main proposals of the European Movement, the Convention is supported by a two-tiered review mechanism, for it depends both on the European Commission of Human Rights and on the European Court of Human Rights. The Convention establishes a European Commission of Human Rights to consider appeals submitted by the contracting states or by natural or legal persons, which are then referred to the European Court of Human Rights. The rulings of the Court are binding and cannot be appealed. The European Commission of Human Rights held its inaugural session on 12 July 1954.

Since the 1950s, the Council of Europe has been the instigator of a whole series of international treaties through which the signatory states have undertaken to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons within their jurisdiction.

### **III. Benelux**

Of all the organisations for economic cooperation created in the post-war period, Benelux is considered a precursor and a proving ground. The transitional Netherlands–Belgium–Luxembourg Customs Convention was signed on 5 September 1944 by the three governments-in-exile in London. It followed the Benelux monetary agreement of 21 October 1943, which fixed exchange rates between the Belgian–Luxembourg franc and the Dutch guilder.

The Customs Convention established a tariff community between the three countries and provided for the subsequent creation of an economic union to foster economies of scale. The Convention also introduced a common external customs tariff and eliminated customs duties on trade within Benelux, but it maintained other protectionist barriers, such as quotas, levies, etc.

Economic union was to be achieved in three successive stages: the unification of customs duties; the unification of excise duties, transfer tax and customs legislation; and, in the longer term, an economic union.

To this end, the Benelux Convention provided for the creation of an Administrative Council for Customs, a Council for Trade Agreements and a Council of the Economic Union.

Through this agreement, the three countries were not so much trying to achieve complete economic integration as to strengthen their position as small states under threat on the international stage, in particular at a time when the multilateral monetary agreements were being negotiated at Bretton Woods.

On 1 January 1948, the Benelux Customs Union became operative. In a very difficult post-



war economic climate, the Benelux conventions offered barrier-free trade to the three signatories. But implementing the conventions was not always easy. Difficulties arose between the three governments, notably because of their conflicting opinions on European cooperation, their attitudes towards Germany and the use of aid made available by the Marshall Plan. The delicate negotiations between the three partners highlighted the difficulties involved in forging an economic union between states that, in the aftermath of the war, had diverse economic structures and national interests.

In October 1949, the three countries adopted a preliminary Benelux union treaty, which retained many safeguard clauses but, at the same time, allowed the gradual elimination of quantitative restrictions.

In July 1953, they agreed on a protocol to coordinate economic and social policy. A few months later, a second protocol on a common trade policy encouraged a common import/export policy vis-à-vis third countries. Benelux then began to participate as a separate entity within the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). Gradually, the three partners learned to speak with one voice and to adopt common positions on international issues.

On 3 February 1958, in The Hague, they signed the Benelux Economic Union Treaty in which they declared their determination to achieve the free movement of people, goods, capital and services as well as to pursue a coordinated policy in economic, financial and social matters. The Benelux Economic Union Treaty entered into force in 1960.

#### **IV. Western Union**

European cooperation was not just in the field of economic affairs or customs; it also involved military aspects.

In Dunkirk, on 4 March 1947, France and the United Kingdom signed a mutual assistance pact. Set in the post-war climate, this friendship and cooperation treaty was openly targeted at vanquished Germany in order to forestall any new aggression on its part. The French Government sought to guard against what it still considered a potential threat from across the Rhine.

However, in the following months, tension continued to rise between the Western and Soviet blocs. In October, the recently-created Cominform took a fiercely critical stance towards the aid provided by the Marshall Plan, unveiled by the United States in June 1947, for the rebuilding of Europe. Cominform officials condemned what they regarded as the subservience of Europe to America, and both the USSR and its satellite countries refused help from the Marshall Plan. The Western European countries, wanting above all to stop communist expansion, sought to convince Washington that it should grant temporary financial and material aid to the Western democracies that had been seriously weakened by five years of war.

On 22 January 1948, Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, delivered a speech to the House of Commons in which he condemned the Soviet threat and asserted his determination to further the United Kingdom's cooperation with France and the Benelux countries through a Western Union that would expand the Dunkirk Treaty. A few days later, the Prague coup of

25 February 1948, when the communists forcibly seized power in Czechoslovakia, only heightened international tension and the dangers arising from the Cold War.

The United States quickly made known its preference for a regional pact which would exceed mere military matters. Talks were immediately begun during which the British Government unveiled to France and the Benelux countries a plan for a mutual defence alliance in the event of external aggression.

On 17 March 1948, the five countries signed the Brussels Treaty establishing Western Union, designed to guard against any armed aggression in Europe (i.e. not including the overseas territories), no longer just from Germany, against any of its members.

At the same time, Denmark, Norway and Sweden discussed the idea of military cooperation within a Scandinavian defence union. Inspired by Finland's experience, but remaining divided about their neutral status, these countries wanted to protect themselves against any possible Soviet pressure and considered calling on the United States to provide them with the armaments required to deter any attack. But the regional plan failed once and for all in 1949 when the Americans announced their unequivocal refusal to arm a neutral alliance.

The Brussels Treaty, scheduled to remain in force for 50 years, provides for the organisation of cooperation amongst the five signatories in the military, economic, social and cultural spheres. A united Military High Command of Western Union, a kind of joint HQ, was created. However, the Brussels Treaty was soon left devoid of its newly-expanded authority when a succession of treaties was signed which established the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (April 1948), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (April 1949), the Council of Europe (May 1949) and the European Coal and Steel Community (April 1951). However, although the Brussels Treaty failed to create a customs union, it did partially meet the concerns of the Americans, who considered that it reinforced the position and willingness of the five member countries, all keen to receive economic and military aid from the United States.

## **V. NATO**

The five European signatories to the Brussels Treaty quickly realised that they could not repel an attack from the USSR on their own. The Berlin Blockade, which ended in May 1949, clearly demonstrated that strong Western solidarity could prevent a tense situation from escalating into a military conflict. The United States was therefore keen to sign a military alliance with its European allies. Although the US Senate, jealously guarding its constitutional powers, would agree only to a conventional alliance, the US Government was nevertheless determined to prevent and, where necessary, repel any communist aggression in Europe.

On 4 April 1949, 12 Foreign Ministers gathered in Washington to sign the North Atlantic Treaty, thereby establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which incorporated Western Union. In addition to the five signatory states to the Brussels Treaty, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Portugal also joined NATO. Two events — the explosion of the Soviet Union's first atomic bomb in September 1949 and the start of the Korean War in June 1950 — accelerated the creation of NATO's integrated military structure. At the same time, the United States insisted on the inclusion of German troops. In 1955, after the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC), the Federal

Republic of Germany officially joined NATO, and Greece and Turkey also became members in 1952. In 1950, the US General and World War II hero Dwight D. Eisenhower became the first Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe. The following year, the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) was established near Paris. In 1967, it was moved to its permanent location in Casteau, near Mons, Belgium.

The need for a Euro-American alliance was angrily disputed by communists around the world, and the NATO negotiations were accompanied by scarcely veiled threats from the Kremlin against the Western powers. But the climate of fear surrounding the ratification of the accession treaties by Western parliaments merely spurred them to move more quickly. The North Atlantic Treaty came into force on 23 August 1949 and opened the way for the defence of Western Europe on a transatlantic basis.

## **VI. The European Organisation for Nuclear Research**

Alongside European economic, political and monetary cooperation, scientists in Europe in the post-war period called for a revival of university exchanges between countries and for the setting up of research programmes which were often too sophisticated and too costly for national laboratories acting on their own. A further aim was to achieve levels of technological and nuclear advancement comparable to those of the United States and the Soviet Union, which exploded their first atomic bombs in July 1945 and August 1949, respectively.

The idea of a European institute for nuclear science geared towards civilian applications was put forward at the European conference on culture organised by the European Movement and held in Lausanne from 8 to 12 December 1949. The project was then taken up in Geneva by the European Cultural Centre and subsequently in Paris by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). In November 1951, also in Geneva, an intergovernmental council was created to study nuclear cooperation and the construction of a large European particle accelerator. In Geneva, on 15 February 1952, Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia signed the Agreement constituting a Council of Representatives of European States for planning an international laboratory and organising other forms of cooperation in nuclear research. International scientific conferences were held in Copenhagen in June 1952 and in Amsterdam in October 1952 to set the objectives and the location — Meyrin in the canton of Geneva — of a European Organisation for Nuclear Research, known henceforth by the French acronym CERN.

The Convention for the establishment of CERN was signed in Paris on 1 July 1953 by the states that had signed the provisional agreement, together with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Greece. It entered into force on 29 September 1954, the day on which the Convention was ratified by France and the Federal Republic of Germany. Austria joined in 1959, and Spain was a member between 1961 and 1969, withdrawing, as did Yugoslavia in 1962, for financial reasons. Unlike nuclear power plants, CERN worked exclusively on fundamental research into nuclear matter and particle physics. As soon as it was created, it concentrated its efforts on the building of a synchro-cyclotron and a proton synchrotron based on accelerator technology. For that purpose, physicists from all the member countries were brought together for a specific period. The European Organisation for Nuclear Research does not conduct any military research programmes.

On 15 June 1954, the representatives of eight European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) met in Paris to establish the European Atomic Energy Society (EAES). The Society sought to encourage the spread of the scientific and industrial applications of atomic energy, in particular by promoting scientific cooperation through exchanges involving engineers and researchers working on programmes relating to the strictly peaceful use of nuclear energy. The EAES quickly became a European forum for meetings and debates.

## **VII. Economic cooperation**

At the end of World War II, a series of initiatives were launched in an attempt to rebuild the economies of Europe, left devastated by five years of deadly conflict. The emergency aid schemes that were set up aimed to meet the pressing need for food supplies among the local population and also to deliver vital products such as coal and steel for heavy industry. With the financial, material and military support of the United States, the purpose of the cooperation that was pursued after the war was primarily to revive economic activity on the European continent, to rebuild and modernise production facilities and to stimulate a resumption of trade.

### **A. The Tripartite Council for Economic Cooperation**

In February 1944, in response to repeated requests from France that a bilateral customs union be set up, Belgium suggested that the Netherlands should be included in the talks already under way on the establishment of a joint council for economic cooperation on regeneration and reconstruction. The Belgian authorities were anxious to counterbalance France and therefore insisted on the participation of the Netherlands, with whom they planned to sign a Benelux customs convention in September 1944 in succession to the Benelux monetary agreement signed on 21 October 1943. For their part, and in spite of all their efforts, the Dutch were unable to persuade France to accept the participation of Great Britain, traditionally considered by the Dutch to be the best guarantor of their interests. On 2 January 1945, the Belgium–Luxembourg Economic Union and the Netherlands presented France with a new document setting out, in particular, conciliation procedures to be completed before any changes were made to customs tariffs with regard to the coordination of industrial equipment resources and to the supply of foodstuffs. On 24 February 1945, while these negotiations were taking place, Belgium and France signed limited economic agreements on the resumption of trade, on the exchange of tax information concerning assets held in one country by a person residing in the other country, and on payment facilities between the two national banks.

On 20 March 1945, two months before the total liberation of the Netherlands, the Economic Agreement on Mutual Consultation was finally signed in Paris, setting up a Joint Council for Economic Cooperation, or a Tripartite Council for Economic Cooperation, which was responsible for investigating the feasibility of coordinating customs duties, quota measures, price controls, social security systems and measures to combat unemployment. Specialised committees for coal, steel, industry, textiles, agriculture and maritime transport were also set up with the task of carrying out studies and considering the production situation in occupied Germany. In this way, the Council helped to facilitate the delivery of raw materials and also made available to its members a number of German industrial and scientific patents that had been sequestered. However, France did encounter some reluctance on the part of its partners

with regard to the issue of plans for the economic and territorial dismantling of a defeated Germany.

On 15 August 1947, France used the Marshall Plan and US pressure for greater economic cooperation in Europe to its advantage and informed its partners on the Tripartite Council of its wish to set up a customs union with interested governments. But the Benelux countries, who did not want to give the British the impression that they went along only with French policy, took no action on the invitation. As a result, France, which was already dissatisfied with the achievements of the Tripartite Council, sealed its fate by announcing, on 7 October 1948, its decision not to attend any further meetings of the Council, which comprised France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. France preferred instead to work with the enlarged forums created, in particular, under the Marshall Plan.

### **B. Customs union projects**

After the end of World War II, several projects for the creation of regional customs unions emerged in Western Europe. For example, in 1947, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland, well aware of the small scale of their domestic market, considered the creation of a Scandinavian customs union. In 1949, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom also began negotiations for a regional economic union to be dubbed Uniscan.

At the same time, France and Italy negotiated a tariff union treaty that was never ratified. In January 1948, France, pressed by the United States to ensure the success of European integration, proposed the creation of a customs union to Italy and the Benelux countries. This economic association for the liberalisation of trade and exchange rates was first called Fritalux, which was later changed to Finebel (France–Italy–Netherlands–Belgium–Luxembourg).

In September 1947, a plan for a customs union between Greece and Turkey was also announced. However, none of these projects advanced beyond the exploratory stage, and they all appeared too limited compared to the generalised liberalisation of trade advocated by the OEEC and the planned creation of a European Payments Union (EPU), which was actively supported by the United States.

### **C. The European Coal Organisation**

At the end of World War II, Europe was facing a dire shortage of coal. The coal industry had been the target of massive attacks for military and strategic reasons. As a result, Europe's coal industry was totally disorganised, traditional supplies were interrupted, and output was much lower than during the interwar years. Placed under Allied control, Germany no longer had the means to control its own production and exports. From 1945, the coal shortage, working conditions in the mines and difficult living conditions aggravated social tension. Many industrial regions were hit by strikes that further decreased output. Moreover, the critical situation in road, rail and inland waterway transport did little to facilitate international trade.

The United States and the United Kingdom, determined to restore the coal industry to its role as the driving force behind Europe's energy sector and economy, decided to create an emergency agency to enable the coal-importing and coal-exporting countries to meet and plan



their deliveries. The European Coal Organisation (ECO), designed as a financially-independent international body, held its first meeting on 18 May 1945, although its official status was not established until 1 January 1946. The ECO drew on the experience of the Solid Fuels Section, an Allied military body that, in 1944–1945, was responsible for the distribution of coal to the Allied forces in Europe. The members of the ECO, apart from the United States and the United Kingdom, were Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway, later joined by Austria, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Turkey, and by Finland, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland as neutral associated countries. Germany was represented by an Anglo-American military body. The Soviet Union was formally invited by the United States to join the ECO, but the offer was turned down because of disagreement over reparations required from defeated Germany.

The logistics of the London-based ECO were handled by the United Kingdom. Its task was to make recommendations to the governments of coal-producing countries in order to ensure the smooth and fair distribution of coal. The bulk of coal deliveries were made by the United States and had to cover military, civilian and commercial needs so as to revive the European economy. Facing monetary problems and a shortage of foreign exchange, the ECO also promoted the bartering of coke for essential equipment and food. Originally set up for one year, the ECO wound up its activities on 31 December 1947 after handing over to the Coal Committee of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), established in Geneva in 1947 by the United Nations.

#### **D. The Economic Commission for Europe**

On 11 December 1946, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution of principle in support of the creation of an Economic Commission designed to help the war-torn countries of Europe. On 28 March 1947, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

Swedish economist Karl Gunnar Myrdal was the first Executive Secretary of the ECE, a subsidiary body and regional economic commission of the United Nations (UN). It is the only post-war European organisation to have included all the countries on the European continent, in addition to the United States as financial backer and Canada. However, in practice, almost all the countries of Eastern Europe rapidly abandoned their involvement with the various technical committees established by the ECE. As a result, only the permanent secretariat and the annual plenary sessions of the Commission, to which all the member countries sent representatives, if nothing more, ensured that minimal contact was maintained between the Western and Eastern parts of continental Europe. The Economic Commission could not take any decision concerning a member country without the consent of the national authorities. It originally consisted of representatives from the 17 European UN members: Belgium, Belarus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the USSR and Yugoslavia, as well as the United States. The ECE held its first session from 2 to 14 May 1947 at the UN headquarters in Geneva. It was the de facto successor of the European Economic Assistance Committee, the European Coal Commission and the European Central Inland Transport Organisation, which were created as a matter of urgency as soon as the war was over.

The Economic Commission for Europe, which set up a number of specialised committees, carried out studies, drew up statistics, offered expertise and issued recommendations to its

members. It facilitated solutions to economic problems arising from the reconstruction of countries destroyed or weakened by the war, in particular the supply of coal, mining timber, electricity and oil. It also promoted trade and improvements in intra-European transport. In addition, the ECE supported the adoption of conventions or agreements on traffic management and road signs and signals, customs formalities, commercial arbitration and town planning. Initially set up on an experimental basis, the ECE became a permanent UN agency in 1951.