


# The establishment of Western European Union (WEU)

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## The establishment of Western European Union (WEU)

After the failure of the EDC, the German question remained on the agenda. At a conference of the Nine Powers (France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States), held in London from 28 September to 3 October 1954, several decisions were taken. These included ending the occupation regime in the FRG and restoring the country's sovereignty, monitoring German rearmament by amending the 1948 Brussels Treaty, accession of the FRG and Italy to the modified Brussels Treaty and accession of the FRG to NATO. The United Kingdom's undertaking to keep troops on the European mainland also reassured France as to German rearmament while at the same time preventing the withdrawal of US forces.

On 23 October 1954, at the end of the London Conference, the Protocol Modifying and Completing the Brussels Treaty was signed. The five original signatories of Western Union (France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) were joined by Italy and the FRG. The Paris Accords, which were seen as an alternative solution to the failed plan for a European army, established [Western European Union \(WEU\)](#). They marked the end of the regime of occupation in the FRG and endorsed the accession of West Germany and Italy to the Brussels Treaty.

Alongside the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs that already existed, the new Treaty created a consultative parliamentary Assembly, an Agency for the Control of Armaments and a Standing Armaments Committee. In order not to offend European public opinion, which was still hostile towards a now officially authorised German rearmament, the Paris Accords prohibited Germany from manufacturing or acquiring ABC (atomic, biological or chemical) weapons of mass destruction. This time, the French National Assembly accepted the rearmament of West Germany. West Germany was now able to establish its own army, the *Bundeswehr*, which joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on 5 May 1955. Despite France's rejection of the EDC project, the rearmament of the FRG went ahead all the same.

The Soviets, who conducted an intense propaganda campaign of their own throughout the entire process of negotiations on German rearmament, reacted immediately by concluding a treaty of cooperation and mutual assistance between the eight Eastern bloc countries (the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Hungary). Signed on 14 May 1955, this became known as the Warsaw Pact, and in many respects it mirrored the Atlantic Pact. The East German 'Garrisoned People's Police' (*Kasernierte Volkspolizei*), an army in all but name, became the National People's Army (*Nationale Volksarmee*).

The failure of the EDC and the establishment of WEU, closely linked to NATO, revealed Western Europe's inability to develop a defence system without the United States. Even though WEU was the first European organisation with responsibility for defence and security, the failure of the EDC marked the end of European political integration in the area of defence. It would not be until 1955, and the Messina Declaration, that the process of European integration could begin once more. The European states once again focused their efforts on economic integration, with the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) under the Rome Treaties of 25 March 1957.