

## 9 May, Europe Day

**Caption:** All the EU Member States celebrate 9 May as Europe Day, in commemoration of the declaration of 9 May 1950 made by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, generally considered as the founding moment of the European integration process.

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On that day, five years after the end of the Second World War, [Robert Schuman](#) gave an address inspired by Jean Monnet in which he proposed that coal and steel resources in France and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) be pooled within an organisation that would be open to the other countries of Europe.

The [press conference](#) was held at 6 p.m. in the Salon de l'Horloge at the Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry). More than 200 journalists from France and abroad were invited to witness the declaration by Robert Schuman on the pooling of coal and steel resources. But having been informed of the press conference at the last minute, few were actually able to attend. Only journalists based in Paris witnessed the event. There were no photographers in attendance, nor radio or television to record proceedings. This meant that Schuman was obliged to record his famous address shortly afterwards for posterity.

[The declaration](#) underlined the role played by France in the building of a strong, prosperous and peaceful Europe, resting on a Franco-German foundation. It did not simply set out the objectives; it also proposed opening negotiations on the basis of clearly defined principles. It set out the purpose of the High Authority, which was referred to for the first time in the international arena. In an introductory statement, René Mayer, the French Minister for Justice and Member of Parliament for Constantine, insisted that France should also invite the other European nations to work jointly to support development in Africa, since France was no longer able to meet the costs of developing its overseas territories alone.

With this almost revolutionary declaration, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet sought to generate a shock wave that would launch the process of European unification and bring about a profound change in mentalities that would help win over the people of Europe.

Schuman knew that he had to act quickly if he were to take advantage of the [pro-European fervour](#) triggered by his declaration of 9 May 1950. On 20 June 1950, he organised a [conference](#) in Paris to draw up a draft treaty establishing a coal and steel community.

Schuman was adamant that the concept of a single supranational organisation — the only institution referred to in the declaration — must be included in the draft treaty just as it stood. Before opening the negotiations on technical procedures, he therefore called on the countries involved to declare their support for a supranational authority called the 'High Authority'.

The German, Italian, Belgian, Netherlands and Luxembourg Governments accepted this recommendation, although the Netherlands Government did express certain reservations about the role of the High Authority, at least as it was envisaged by Jean Monnet. The British political authorities still resolutely rejected the supranational principle, thereby ruling out Great Britain's direct participation for the time being.

On 18 April 1951, the [Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community](#) (ECSC) was signed in Paris by Robert Schuman for France, Konrad Adenauer for the FRG, Paul van Zeeland and Joseph Meurice for Belgium, Count Carlo Sforza for Italy, Joseph Bech for Luxembourg and Dirk Stikker and Jan van den Brink for the Netherlands.

The Treaty establishing the ECSC created several institutions responsible for pooling Europe's coal and steel resources and for maintaining peace in Europe:

- a High Authority assisted by a Consultative Committee;

- a Common Assembly;
- a Court of Justice;
- a Special Council of Ministers.

The celebration of 9 May is not just about marking the anniversary of the founding moment of European integration. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the current and real situation, which changes daily. It celebrates the realities of life in a European Union based on the principles of the rule of law, a Union with a democratic order founded on popular sovereignty and on values that are now accepted and shared by the vast majority of European people. The meaning of the celebration lies in its commemoration of the path that had to be taken to consolidate these principles and values, without taking for granted the victories won.

Europe Day on 9 May offers a yearly opportunity to bring Europe closer to its citizens.

For more information:

- [The symbols of the European Union — Europe Day](#)
- [Subject file: From the origins of the Schuman Plan to the ECSC Treaty](#)
- [Research corpus: From the Schuman Plan to the Paris Treaty \(1950–1952\)](#)

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