

Adenauer's plan for a Franco-German union

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Adenauer's plan for a Franco-German union

In early 1950, Franco-German relations were characterised by attempts to bring the two countries closer together but also by sharp tensions over the [question of the Saar](#) and the possible [rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany](#). From 13 to 15 January 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman went on a [fact-finding visit to the FRG](#) to meet Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. But despite the historic nature of this meeting and the subsequent commitment of the two men to European unity, Robert Schuman's trip did not produce any tangible results and merely highlighted the major [differences](#) of opinion between them on the settlement of the Saar question. France was aware of the strategic importance of the German regions of the Saar, which were among the richest and most productive [coalfields](#) in Europe, and refused to return the region to Germany. Tensions created by the Saar question after Schuman's visit to Germany continued to rise. The German authorities wanted to [put an end to the special status of the Saar](#); they called for a referendum to be held on the territory's future, but met with blunt refusal from Paris.

Nevertheless, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was determined to end West Germany's isolation and restore its territorial sovereignty. Although Robert Schuman's visit to the FRG did not yield the desired results, Chancellor Adenauer made several public statements advocating the establishment of closer relations between France and West Germany. Adenauer believed that the future of Europe depended on reconciliation and good relations between these two countries.

Two months after Robert Schuman's trip to the FRG, on [6 and 21 March 1950](#), the German Chancellor granted an interview to American journalist Kingsbury-Smith in which he mooted the idea of a [Franco-German union](#) and insisted that reconciliation between France and the FRG was vital for the rebuilding of Western Europe. The plan involved the political and economic unification of the two countries and the establishment of a single parliament and a joint nationality. In his proposals, Konrad Adenauer raised the possibility of other European countries joining this Franco-German core to form the cornerstone of a united states of Europe.

Chancellor Adenauer's proposals were dismissed by the [French authorities](#), which saw the German plan as utopian and lacking in credibility. [The French press](#) did not take the plan for a Franco-German union seriously, claiming that it had no chance of success because it was based on the condition that the Saar be restored to Germany. [General de Gaulle](#) was the only French politician not to denigrate Adenauer's plan. On 16 March 1950, during a press conference held at the French Foreign Ministry, he recognised the need for Franco-German cooperation and welcomed Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's proposal to establish a union between France and the FRG that would put an end to the rivalry between the two countries.