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EXPLAINED



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The founding fathers of the EU





THE EUROPEAN UNION EXPLAINED

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The founding fathers of the EU

Over half a century ago a number of visionary leaders inspired the creation of the European Union we live in today. Without their energy and motivation we would not be living in the sphere of peace and stability that we take for granted. From resistance fighters to lawyers, the founding

fathers were a diverse group of people who held the same ideals: a peaceful, united and prosperous Europe. This collection tells the story behind 11 of the EU's founding fathers. Many others have worked tirelessly towards and inspired the European project.



Konrad
Adenauer



Joseph
Bech



Johan Willem
Beyen



Winston
Churchill



Alcide De
Gasperi



Walter
Hallstein



Sicco
Mansholt



Jean
Monnet



Robert
Schuman



Paul-Henri
Spaak



Altiero
Spinelli



Konrad Adenauer: a pragmatic democrat and tireless unifier



Konrad Adenauer 1876 – 1967

The first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, who stood at the head of the newly-formed state from 1949-63, changed the face of post-war German and European history more than any other individual.

Like many politicians of his generation, Adenauer had already realised following the First World War that lasting peace could only be achieved through a united Europe. His experiences during the Third Reich (he was removed from office as the Mayor of Cologne by the Nazis) served to confirm this opinion.

In the six years from 1949-55 Adenauer realised far-reaching foreign policy goals to bind Germany's future with the western alliance: membership of the Council of Europe (1951), foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (1952), and Germany's entry into NATO (1955).

A cornerstone of Adenauer's foreign policy was reconciliation with France. Together with French President Charles de Gaulle a historic turning point was achieved: in 1963 the one-time arch-enemies Germany and France signed a treaty of friendship, which became one of the milestones on the road to European integration.

German politics

Born in Catholic Cologne on 5 January 1876 Konrad Adenauer's family was of humble background, but also one of order and discipline instilled by his father. His marriage in 1904 to the daughter of an influential Cologne family brought him into contact with local politicians, leading him to become active in politics as well. Taking full advantage of his political talent, as a member of the catholic 'Zentrum' party his career took flight and he became Mayor of Cologne in 1917. This post included involvement in large projects such as the building of the first ever highway in Germany between Cologne and Bonn, and he became known as a determined and decisive personality. Steering clear from the extreme political convictions that attracted so many of his generation, Adenauer was committed to instilling diligence, order, Christian morals and values into his fellow citizens.

From the late 1920s the Nazi Party began a slander campaign against Adenauer. He was accused of having anti-German sentiments, wasting public funds and of being sympathetic towards the Zionist movement. When in 1933, after the Nazis had taken power, Adenauer refused to decorate the city with swastikas for a visit by Hitler, he was dismissed from office and his bank accounts frozen. He was now jobless, homeless and without income, dependent on the benevolence of his friends and the church. Although he lay low for the duration of the war, he was nevertheless arrested on several occasions. After the failed assassination attempt on Hitler in 1944, Adenauer was imprisoned in the notorious Gestapo prison in Cologne Brauweiler.

After the war, Adenauer was reinstated as Mayor of Cologne by the Americans but removed shortly afterwards by the British, when Cologne was transferred into the British zone of occupation. This gave Adenauer the time to devote himself to the setting up of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) which he hoped would unify Protestant and Catholic Germans in one party. In 1949, he became the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). Initially, it was thought that Adenauer would be Chancellor for only a short time, as he was already 73 years old by this time. However, despite this belief, Adenauer (nicknamed 'Der Alte', or 'The Elder') went on to hold this position for the next 14 years, making him not only the youngest ever mayor of Cologne, but also the oldest chancellor Germany has ever seen. Under his leadership, West Germany became a stable democracy and achieved a lasting reconciliation with its neighbouring countries. He managed to regain some sovereignty for West Germany, by integrating the country with the emerging Euro-Atlantic community (NATO and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation).



Adenauer shaking hands with French President Charles de Gaulle in 1961.

Contribution to European integration

Adenauer's experiences during the Second World War made him a political realist. His views on Germany's role in Europe were strongly influenced by the two world wars and the century-long animosity between Germany and France. He therefore focused his attention on promoting the idea of pan-European cooperation.

Adenauer was a great proponent of the European Coal and Steel Community, which was launched with the Schuman Declaration on 9 May 1950, and also the later treaty for the European Economic Community in March 1957.

Adenauer's opinions on Europe were based on the idea that European unity was essential for lasting peace and stability. For this reason he worked tirelessly for the reconciliation of Germany with its former enemies, especially France. Later, in 1963, The Élysée Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Friendship, set the seal on this reconciliation. With it, Germany and France established a firm foundation for relations that ended centuries of rivalry between them.

As a result of his political talents, his determination, pragmatism and clear vision for the role of Germany in a united Europe, Adenauer ensured that Germany became, and remains to this day, a free and democratic society. This is now not only taken for granted, but also deeply integrated into modern German society.

Konrad Adenauer is one of the most remarkable figures in European history. European unity was to him not only about peace, but also a way of reintegrating post-Nazi Germany into international life. Europe as we know it today would not have been possible without the confidence he inspired in other European states by means of his consistent foreign policy. His achievements are still recognised by his fellow-Germans as, in 2003, they voted him 'The greatest German of all time'.

Joseph Bech: how a small country can play a crucial role in European integration



Joseph Bech 1887- 1975

Joseph Bech was the Luxembourgish politician that helped set up the European Coal and Steel Community in the early 1950s and a leading architect behind European integration in the later 1950s.

It was a joint memorandum from the Benelux countries that led to the convening of the Messina Conference in June 1955, paving the way for the European Economic Community.

Bech's experience of living in Luxembourg during the two World Wars made him understand how powerless such a small state could be, isolated between two powerful neighbours. This led him to realise the importance of internationalism and cooperation between states if a stable and prosperous Europe were to be achieved. He helped to set up the Benelux union

between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, an experience which proved to be of great benefit when the European institutions were developed. The process of forming this union between the three small states has since been considered a prototype for the European Union itself.

Early life and rise through politics

Joseph Bech was born on 17 February 1887 in Diekirch, Luxembourg. He studied law in Fribourg in Switzerland and in Paris, France. After graduation in 1914, he set up a law practice and, that same year, was elected to the Luxembourgian Chamber of Deputies for the newly-founded Christian Party.

In 1921 Bech became Minister of Internal Affairs and Education. In 1926 he became Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Agriculture. It was during his period as Prime Minister between 1926 and 1936 that the global financial crisis struck. Bech understood the vital importance that exports play in a country's economy. As Luxembourg's main trading partner was Germany, the country was very dependent on its neighbour. As a result Bech tried to limit Luxembourg's economic dependence on Germany as much as possible. It was in this attempt to expand markets for the Luxembourgish steel industry that he negotiated for the first time for closer economic cooperation and a customs

union with Belgium, and later with the Netherlands. These were essential efforts that contributed to the forming of the Benelux union during the Second World War.

The Second World War

When Nazi Germany invaded Luxembourg on 10 May 1940, Bech was forced into exile with a number of other ministers and the Head of State, Grand Duchess Charlotte, forming a government-in-exile in London. It was in his capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs that he signed the Benelux Treaty in 1944. His experience in creating an economic union promoting the free movement of workers, capital, services, and goods in the region, would later prove useful in setting up the European Economic Community.

Throughout his career Bech remained marked by the memory of the First World War and the crisis that followed wherein Luxembourg was in danger of being swallowed up by its neighbours. This feeling of powerlessness led to his support for strong internationalism.

He therefore represented Luxembourg in all multilateral negotiations during and after the Second World War, and encouraged his compatriots to accept the accession of the Grand Duchy in the international organisations that were created: Benelux in 1944, The United Nations in 1946 and NATO in 1949.

The European Coal and Steel Community

On May 9 1950, Bech was the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg. Aware of the need for his country to bring its neighbours together through economic and political agreements, it was with enthusiasm that he welcomed the proposal put forward on that date by his French counterpart, Robert Schuman, to create a European Coal and Steel Community. He knew that this would give Luxembourg the opportunities it needed and give the country a place and a voice in Europe. A further boost to Luxembourg's standing in Europe was given when he managed to achieve that the headquarters of the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community be located in Luxembourg.

As a next step, Bech supported the plans for a European Defence Community. They were rejected by France in 1954, but that was far from the end of European integration.

The Messina Conference

From 1 to 3 June 1955, Joseph Bech chaired the Messina Conference which later led to the Treaty of Rome, forming the European Economic Community. The focus of this Conference was a memorandum submitted by the three Benelux countries, including Joseph Bech as the representative of Luxembourg. The memorandum combined French and Dutch plans offering both to undertake new activities in the fields of

transport and energy, especially nuclear, and a general Common Market, with focus on the need for a common authority with real powers. On the basis of experience with the Benelux and the Coal and Steel Community, the three Foreign Ministers proposed a plan, that further developed on an idea put forward by Dutch Minister Beyen, which recommended economic cooperation as the way to achieve European unification. This 'Spaak Report', named after Belgian Minister Spaak, Chairman of the Committee that had drafted it, became the basis for the Intergovernmental Conference which drafted the treaties on a common market and atomic energy cooperation, and which were signed in Rome on 25 March 1957.

In 1959, after having held this post since 1929, Bech gave up the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. From 1959 to 1964, he chaired the House of Representatives before leaving the political scene at the age of 77. He died 11 years later, in 1975. For his role in the unification of Europe, we now consider him one of the founding fathers of the European Union. He provided an excellent example of how a small country such as Luxembourg can play a crucial role on the international stage.



Bech with a cine-camera, enjoying a moment of relaxation at the Messina Conference in 1955.

Johan Willem Beyen: a plan for a common market



Johan Willem Beyen 1897- 1976

The international banker, businessman and politician Johan Willem Beyen was a Dutch politician who, with his 'Beyen Plan', breathed new life into the process of European integration in the mid-1950s.

Beyen is one of the lesser-known members of the group of Founding Fathers of the EU. Amongst the people who knew him he was admired for his charm, international orientation and social ease.

In the Netherlands, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Beyen gave an important input to the European unification process. He was able to convince reluctant forces in the Netherlands, as well as in Europe, to accept European integration. His 'Beyen Plan' was a proposal for a customs union and far-reaching economic cooperation within a common European market.

The essence of this was actually decided in the Rome Treaties in 1957 and has been at the core of the European Union ever since.

Early life

Johan Willem (Wim) Beyen was born on 2 May 1897 in Utrecht in the Netherlands. As the son of a wealthy family he had a carefree childhood, enjoying an international upbringing with a focus on literature and music. He began his career in national and international finance after graduating in law at the University of Utrecht in 1918. His first post was at the Dutch Ministry of Finance, but in 1924 he moved into the corporate and banking world. He eventually became President of the Bank for International Settlements and Director of the British–Dutch consumer goods company Unilever.

Second World War

During the Second World War Beyen worked in exile in London, while his home country was occupied by Nazi Germany. In 1944

he played an important role at the Bretton Woods Conference where foundations were laid for a post-war international financial structure. From 1946 he represented the Netherlands on the board of the World Bank and from 1948 played the same role at the International Monetary Fund.

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Beyen was Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs during the years of reconstruction following the Second World War. During the war Beyen had become convinced that full regional economic cooperation was necessary to prevent a recurrence of the kind of financial crisis seen in the 1930s. Leaders throughout post-war Europe started to realise that the horrors of war and economic crises could only be overcome by international cooperation.

Whilst some initiatives focused on pursuing this cooperation on a global scale, Beyen believed that more could be achieved by regional cooperation. The first steps towards economic cooperation were taken in 1948 with the Marshall Plan – the huge American aid package to Europe which required the European countries to coordinate economic matters in the OECD. Following the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community was created in 1952 with the aim of ultimately making wars in Europe impossible.



Beyen at the Messina Conference, where he introduced his plan for economic cooperation in Europe.

The Beyen Plan

Beyen however saw the possibility of even greater cooperation between European nations. He realised that political integration at that time would have been hard to achieve and managed to persuade his national and international colleagues that further progress could be made with further economic cooperation, believing that political unification would follow. With this in mind, he drew up the Beyen Plan. With his experience in international finance and banking he knew that issues like trade barriers

and unemployment were not easily resolved at national level and required a more international approach. Even though there was reluctance and even some downright opposition within the Dutch government, he managed to put the plan forward both during the negotiations on the European Defence Community and the discussions on the European Political Community in the early 1950s.

A common market

He initially received little support, especially as the French government at the time was not interested in further economic integration. However, when the planned European Defence Community failed because the French parliament decided not to ratify the treaty, this changed. As there was to be neither the planned defence community nor a political community, an impasse arose. This brought the Beyen plan back into the limelight. The plan revolved around the concept that full economic cooperation was necessary, not just in the field of coal and steel but as a whole. The solution was therefore a common market for everything, along the lines of the cooperation between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg created in the 'Benelux' agreement in 1944. The Benelux countries, under the guidance of Belgian Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, coupled Beyen's ideas to a French plan for a Community for Atomic Energy and provided Beyen with the opportunity to outline his plans during the Messina Conference in 1955. He explained that political unity was not conceivable without a common market with some common responsibility for economic and social policy and a supranational authority. This resonated with the opinions of the other Conference participants. It led to six countries signing the Treaties of Rome in March 1957 and creating the European Economic Community and Euratom.

Beyen's role has often been overlooked in later years, but his work contributed to the European integration process in the 1950s and earns him a place amongst the prominent figures we now call the Founding Fathers of the European Union. He will long be remembered as the individual who gave fresh impetus to the European project when it was most needed.

Winston Churchill: calling for a United States of Europe



Winston Churchill 1874 - 1965

Winston Churchill, a former army officer, war reporter and British Prime Minister (1940-45 and 1951-55), was one of the first to call for the creation of a 'United States of Europe'. Following the Second World War, he was convinced that only a united Europe could guarantee peace. His aim was to eliminate the European ills of nationalism and war-mongering once and for all.

He formulated his conclusions drawn from the lessons of history in his famous 'Speech to the academic youth' held at the University of Zurich in 1946: "There is a remedy which ... would in a few years make all Europe ... free and ... happy.

It is to re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom.

We must build a kind of United States of Europe."

Thus the driving force behind the anti-Hitler coalition became an active campaigner for Europe's cause.

Winston Churchill also made a name for himself as a painter and writer: in 1953 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Early life

Winston Churchill was born on 30 November 1874 into the aristocratic Spencer-Churchill family of the noble Dukes of Marlborough, but his mother was born in America. After enjoying a privileged childhood, Churchill began his education in 1888 at Harrow, a top London boys' school. He did not prove to be an outstanding student and school was not therefore something he enjoyed.

On finishing school in 1893, it took him three attempts to pass the entry exam for Sandhurst, the Royal Military Academy. But after graduation he began a military career that, over the next five years, saw him fight battles on three continents, win four medals and an Order of Merit, write five books and win a seat in Parliament, all before his 26th birthday.

Political career

While serving in the British army, Churchill was also a newspaper correspondent. Whilst reporting on the Boer War in South Africa, he made headlines when he escaped from a prisoner of war camp there, returning to England in 1900 to embark on a political career. He was elected to Parliament and served in different Cabinets as Home Secretary and First Lord of the Admiralty (Minister responsible for the navy). In 1915 he was forced to resign after the failure of a particular military campaign. He decided to join the army again and led the men of the 6th Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers in the trenches of France. When in 1917 a new government was formed he became Minister of Munitions. In the years leading up to 1929, Churchill held all of the most important ministerial posts except that of Foreign Minister.

In 1929, he became estranged from his party, the Conservatives. This is the start of a period in Churchill's life known as the 'Wilderness Years'. He continued writing and became a very productive and well published author of articles and books. Churchill was among the very first few people to recognise the growing threat of Hitler long before the outset of the Second World War and the first to voice his concerns.



Churchill gives the 'V' for victory sign during a speech at the European Congress in The Hague in 1948.

Second World War

In 1939, Churchill's predictions became reality as the Second World War broke out. In 1940, he became Prime Minister and led Great Britain through the difficult war years, offering hope and determination to the British people with his inspirational speeches. His staunch refusal to consider defeat or to bargain with the Nazis inspired British resistance, especially at the start of the war when Britain stood alone in its active opposition to Hitler. Nevertheless, he lost the elections after the end of the war. He did not, however, lose his ability to interpret correctly how future events would play out, as proven by his famous speech in Fulton, Missouri about the threat from the Soviet Communists, in which he coined the well-known expression about the 'Iron Curtain'.

A 'United States of Europe'

In 1946 Churchill delivered another famous speech, at the University of Zurich, in which he advocated a 'United States of Europe', urging Europeans to turn their backs on the horrors of the past and look to the future. He declared that Europe could not afford to drag forward the hatred and revenge which sprung from the injuries of the past, and that the first step to recreate the 'European family' of justice, mercy and freedom was "to build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living".

Council of Europe

With this plea for a United States of Europe, Churchill was one of the first to advocate European integration to prevent the atrocities of two world wars from ever happening again, calling for the creation of a Council of Europe as a first step. In 1948, in The Hague, 800 delegates from all European countries met, with Churchill as honorary president, at a grand Congress of Europe.

This led to the creation of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949, the first meeting of which was attended by Churchill himself. His call to action can be seen as propelling further integration as later agreed upon during the Messina Conference in 1955, which led to the Treaty of Rome two years later. It was also Churchill who would first moot the idea of a 'European army' designed to protect the continent and provide European diplomacy with some muscle. Furthermore, the European Court of Human Rights was created in 1959 — a decade after Churchill first championed the idea.

Providing the inspiration to the people of Europe as the binding factor in the allied fight against Nazism and fascism, Winston Churchill consequently became a driving force behind European integration and an active fighter for its cause.

Alcide De Gasperi: an inspired mediator for democracy and freedom in Europe



Alcide De Gasperi 1881 - 1954

From 1945 to 1953, in his roles as Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, Alcide De Gasperi forged the path of the country's destiny in the post-war years.

He was born in the region of Trentino-Alto Adige (South Tyrol) which, until 1918, belonged to Austria. Along with other exceptional statesmen of his time, he campaigned actively for European unity. His experiences of fascism and war — he was imprisoned between 1927 and 1929 before finding asylum in the Vatican — led to his conviction that only the union of Europe could prevent their recurrence.

Time and time again he promoted initiatives aimed at the fusion of Western Europe, working on the realisation of the Marshall Plan and creating close economic ties with other European countries, in particular France. Furthermore, he supported the Schuman Plan for the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community, and helped develop the idea of the common European defence policy.

Early life

Alcide De Gasperi was born on 3 April 1881. His father was a policeman with limited means. He grew up in the Trento region which, at that time, was one of the Italian-speaking areas within the large multinational and multicultural grouping of nations and peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As there were no Italian universities that he could attend with a study grant, he went to Vienna in 1900 to study Philology. There he became active in the Catholic student movement. It was during these student years that he was able to hone the mediating skills that would later become so essential during his politically active years. He was, for example, able to understand that finding solutions to problems was more important than holding grudges and believed that substance was important, not form. When he graduated in 1905, he returned to Trentino where he became a reporter for the newspaper *La Voce Cattolica*. At this time he also became politically active in the

Unione Politica Popolare del Trentino and was elected in 1911 to represent Trentino in the Austrian House of Representatives. He used this position to campaign for the improvement of rights for the Italian minority.

First World War experiences and the 'Idee Ricostruttive'

Although De Gasperi remained politically neutral during the First World War, he did however sympathise with the Vatican's efforts to end the war. When the First World War ended in 1918, De Gasperi's home region became a part of Italy. One year later, he co-founded the Italian People's Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano* – PPI) and became one of their parliamentarians in 1921. As the fascist powers in the Italian government under

Mussolini's leadership grew in strength, openly using violence and intimidation against the PPI, the party was outlawed and dissolved in 1926. De Gasperi himself was arrested in 1927 and sentenced to four years in prison. With the help of the Vatican he was freed after 18 months. He was given asylum within the walls of the Vatican, where he worked for 14 years as a librarian. During the Second World War he wrote the 'Idee ricostruttive' (Ideas for reconstruction) which would form the manifesto of the Christian Democratic Party, secretly founded in 1943. After the collapse of fascism, De Gasperi stood at the helm of the party and served as Prime Minister from 1945 to 1953 in eight consecutive governments. To this day, this record of political longevity in the history of Italian democracy remains unsurpassed.

Role in European integration

During this so-called 'De Gasperi era' Italy was rebuilt by establishing a republican Constitution, consolidating internal democracy and taking the first steps towards economic reconstruction. De Gasperi was an enthusiastic proponent of international cooperation. As the man responsible for most of Italy's post-war reconstruction, he was convinced that Italy needed to restore its role on the international stage. To this end he worked to set up the Council of Europe, persuaded Italy to be part of the American Marshall Plan and to join NATO. His strong cooperation with the United States took place at the same time as Italy had one of the largest communist parties in Western Europe.

Democracy, agreement and freedom

De Gasperi believed that the Second World War taught all Europeans the following lesson: "the future will not be built through force, nor the desire to conquer, but by the patient application of the democratic method, the constructive spirit of agreement, and by respect for freedom". This is what he said when he accepted the Charlemagne prize for his pro-European commitment in 1952. This vision explains his swift response to Robert Schuman's call on 9 May 1950 for an integrated Europe, which led to the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community

(ECSC) a year later. He became the first President of the ECSC Parliamentary Assembly in 1954. And although the project ultimately failed, De Gasperi was a defendant and proponent of the common European defence policy.

European Economic Community

During these first steps towards European integration De Gasperi's role has been described as that of a mediator between Germany and France, which had been divided by almost a century of war. During the final years of his life he was also an inspiring force behind the creation of the European Economic Community. Although he would not live to see this come to fruition - he died in August 1954 - his role was widely acknowledged when the treaties of Rome were signed in 1957.

His background, his wartime experiences, living under fascism and being part of a minority made Alcide De Gasperi very much aware that European unity was necessary to heal the wounds of two world wars and to help prevent the atrocities of the past from ever happening again. He was motivated by a clear vision of a Union of Europe that would not replace individual states, but would allow for them to complement each other.



De Gasperi shaking hands with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in 1953 in Rome.

Walter Hallstein: a diplomatic force propelling swift European integration



Walter Hallstein 1901 - 1982

Walter Hallstein was the first President of the European Commission from 1958 to 1967, a committed European and a decisive proponent of European integration.

As President of the European Commission, Hallstein worked towards a rapid realisation of the Common Market. His energetic enthusiasm and powers of persuasion furthered the cause of integration even beyond the period of his presidency. During his mandate, the integration advanced significantly.

The one-time Secretary of State in the German Foreign Ministry originally attained international recognition through the 'Hallstein Doctrine' of the 1950s, which shaped German foreign policy for years to come, and had at its core the linking of the young democracy with western Europe.

Early life and wartime experiences

Walter Hallstein was born on 17 November 1901, the son of a Protestant building control officer in the south-western German city of Mainz. After graduating from the local grammar school, he studied Law and Political Science in Bonn, Berlin and Munich. In 1925 he graduated and started work as an assistant to a Professor at the University of Berlin. In 1927 he became an examiner at the University of Rostock in northern Germany, qualifying as a lecturer there in 1929. One year later he was appointed as Chair of Private and Company law, a position he would hold for the next ten years, becoming an expert in his field, a respected scholar and an internationally renowned university lecturer. He then became a Professor at the University of Frankfurt from where he was drafted into the German armed forces in 1942, despite his hostility towards Nazism. After the Allied invasion of 1944 Hallstein was taken to a prisoner of war camp in the United States where he set up a camp university of sorts to educate his fellow prisoners on the law and their rights.

After the war he was appointed Vice-Chancellor at the University of Frankfurt and in 1948 was invited by Georgetown University to

be a guest lecturer there. As one of the first German scholars to be invited to an American university, his experiences in America strengthened his conviction that Germany should join the international initiatives aimed at strengthening the bond amongst democracies after the Second World War. Joining international alliances such as the UN and NATO was, to him, pivotal in the return of Germany to the international stage.

European Coal and Steel Community

Hallstein's excellent diplomatic skills, awareness of the need for European unity and his specialised knowledge and experience in the field, led Konrad Adenauer, then Chancellor of Germany, to appoint him as head of the delegation leading negotiations at the Schuman Conference on the forming of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950. During this time he worked closely with Jean Monnet, his French counterpart. They both soon realised that they shared fundamental beliefs on the need for European integration if Europe were to prosper again.

In 1951 Adenauer appointed Hallstein as State Secretary in the Federal Foreign Office where he was not only involved with the establishment of the ECSC, but also with an attempt to create a European Defence Community to unite the budget, forces and arms policies of the western European countries. He was also involved in negotiations with Israel over the payment of reparations to the Jewish people and played an important role in Germany's foreign relations strategy. What would later become known as the 'Hallstein Doctrine' of 1955 was a strict policy agreement that West Germany would not enter into any diplomatic relations with states recognising Eastern Germany (DDR).

The European Economic Community

To Hallstein, the failure to create the European Defence Community in 1954 posed a very large and real threat to security in Germany and western Europe since it would be easier for the Soviet Union to extend its influence in a divided Europe. This led him to focus his energies on the economic integration process rather than the political one. Consequently, he became a staunch proponent of European unity through the forming of a European Economic Community. The first steps towards this economic integration enabling people, services and goods to travel freely were taken during the Messina Conference in 1955. Although Hallstein initially wanted this integration to be all-encompassing and achieved as quickly as possible, the political realities of the time helped him to recognise that a gradual fusing together of the markets of the member states would be of maximum benefit to all. In 1958 the Treaty of Rome came into force and Hallstein was chosen as the first President of the Commission of the European Economic Community.

Presidency of the Commission

Although by now Hallstein realised that integration would not become a reality as fast as he would have liked, as President of the Commission he became a driving force behind the swift integration process that would follow. For instance, during his term of office, the so-called 'Hallstein period', he began the consolidation of European law which was to have a great impact on national

legislation. As a proponent of a federal Europe with a strong Commission and Parliament (to prevent the Union from constantly playing second fiddle to national governments) it is clear that he had one aim for the European Community: the vision of a united Europe as laid down in the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950. At this time, however, France's President De Gaulle had another conviction: where Hallstein thought that a federation was to be sought, meaning ceding a large part of national capacities and power to the Union, De Gaulle believed that Europe should take the confederate route, becoming a 'Europe of States', with more powers remaining in the member states. A build-up of differences between the French government and the other member states over a number of issues pertaining to this fundamental difference of opinions, led to the 'Empty Chair Crisis' in 1965, when France withdrew all of its representatives from the European institutions for some time, before a compromise was reached.

Without Hallstein's energetic enthusiasm, diplomatic negotiating skills and strong powers of persuasion, the speed of European integration witnessed during his years in office would not have been possible.



Hallstein as President of the European Commission speaking in the Netherlands in 1965.

Sicco Mansholt: farmer, resistance fighter and a true European



Sicco Mansholt 1908 - 1995

Sicco Mansholt was a farmer, a member of the Dutch resistance during the Second World War, a national politician and the first European Commissioner responsible for Agriculture. Mansholt's ideas laid the basis for the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, one of the most prominent policies since its founding days.

Having witnessed the horrors of the Dutch famine at the end of the Second World War, Mansholt was convinced that Europe needed to become self-sufficient and that a stable supply of affordable food should be guaranteed for all.

The most important element in Mansholt's plan for the early Common Agricultural Policy was to encourage productivity in agriculture. The policy implied systems where farmers were guaranteed a certain minimum price for their products, providing incentives for them to produce more. His pro-European determination and strong vision for the future, coupled with a will to build on a shared future, identified him as a true European during his lifetime.

Early life

Sicco Mansholt was born on 13 September 1908 in a socially-engaged family running a thriving farm in Groningen, a northern province of The Netherlands. His father was an active member of the Dutch socialist party and an important adviser to the party on agricultural matters. His mother, the daughter of a judge, was one of the first Dutch women to study political science at university and held frequent political gatherings for women.

After high school Mansholt wanted to become a farmer, but having already paid for the farming lease for his brother, Mansholt's father could not afford to pay for Sicco as well. Hoping nevertheless to carve out a career in agriculture, he went to the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, and began work on a tea plantation. He was however unable to get used to the colonial system there and moved back to the Netherlands in 1936. A year later he managed to obtain a plot of land in the polder region of Wieringermeer, married, and lived the life of a farmer until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Second World War

During the war Mansholt was an active member of the Dutch resistance against the Nazi-German invaders. In the early years he hid people on his farm and disseminated intelligence information, but later on he managed an extensive distribution network that provided food to people in hiding throughout the western parts of the country. After the war, as a testament to his experience, courage and organisational skills, he was offered the post of Minister of Agriculture, Fishery and Food Distribution in the new government. At 36 he became the youngest Minister in The Netherlands up to that point.

Restoring agriculture

Directly after the war, with a dire shortage of food and a crisis looming, Mansholt's post was of the greatest importance. He took a number of measures meant to restore food supplies quickly, but at the same time he understood

the need to modernise agriculture more profoundly in order to avoid future shortages and guarantee efficiency. He set minimum prices for the most important agricultural products combined with import taxes and support for exports. To promote productivity, he promoted investments in research, education and the merger of farms into bigger and more efficient units.

A Common Agricultural Policy for Europe

Being a convinced European federalist, Mansholt dreamt of a common agricultural policy for Europe. In 1950 he developed a plan for a common market for agricultural produce in Europe with a supranational governing structure. However, this plan proved to be too ambitious for its time and failed. However, it was later revived and formed the inspiration behind the agricultural policy of the European Economic Community.

After serving as a Minister for twelve and a half years, Mansholt got his chance to launch his plans for a common policy when he became Commissioner for Agriculture in the very first European Commission in 1958. The 1957 Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community and provided for a common market in Europe to be set up in three four-year stages. This twelve-year plan was considered by many to be extremely ambitious and likely to fail, especially the measures relating to the agricultural sector, given the high level of opposition to them. However, Mansholt remained optimistic and went to work. His plans were to agree on a combination of direct subsidy payments for crops and land which might be cultivated with price support mechanisms, including guaranteed minimum prices as well as tariffs and quotas on imports of certain goods from third countries. This would encourage better agricultural productivity so that consumers had a stable supply of affordable food and ensure that the EU had a viable agricultural sector.

The Mansholt Plan

His plans initially met with a fair amount of opposition from farmers and their political representatives, who firmly believed

that this common approach would threaten their livelihood and that only the large farms would be able to survive. There were many obstacles to overcome on the way to agreeing a common European policy, but Mansholt persevered and in 1968 the Commission published the “Memorandum on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy”, otherwise named the “Mansholt Plan”. Basically, the Plan declared that for agriculture to flourish, farmers needed to modernise. This would guarantee productivity and enable European farmers to become self-sufficient.

The agricultural policy was very successful in meeting its initial objective of making Europe more self-sufficient with food products. However, in the 50 years of its existence it has undergone major changes in order to adapt to new times. By the 1970s the policy had worked so well that there were often surpluses of farm produce. During the 1970s, Mansholt became a staunch defender of measures to protect the environment as a key element of agricultural policy. He was Vice-President of the Commission from 1958 to 1972 and its fourth President from 1972 until 1973.

Mansholt's aim was to prevent a recurrence of the dreadful winter famine experienced by the people of Europe at the end of the Second World War. Mansholt's Plan provided for the restoration of Europe's self-sufficiency and a flourishing of European agriculture in an unprecedented short space of time.



As Commissioner for Agriculture and an enthusiastic farmer himself, Mansholt paved the way for the Common Agricultural Policy.

Jean Monnet: the unifying force behind the birth of the European Union



Jean Monnet 1888 - 1979

The French political and economic adviser Jean Monnet dedicated himself to the cause of European integration. He was the inspiration behind the 'Schuman Plan', which foresaw the merger of west European heavy industry.

Monnet was from the Cognac region of France. When he left school at 16 he travelled internationally as a cognac dealer, later also as a banker. During both world wars he held high-level positions relating to the coordination of industrial production in France and the United Kingdom.

As a top advisor to the French government he was the main inspiration behind the famous 'Schuman Declaration' of 9 May 1950, which led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community and, as such, is considered to be the birth of the European Union.

Between 1952 and 1955 he was the first president of its executive body.

Early life

Jean Omer Marie Gabriel Monnet was born on 9 November 1888 in the city of Cognac, France. After finishing school at 16, his father sent him to London to work for the family-run cognac trading business, having realised that his son's extraordinary interpersonal skills made him eminently suitable for a career in international business. And indeed, from this early experience he travelled the world as a respected and successful businessman.

First World War

His application to enrol in the military was turned down on health grounds in 1914. To be able to serve his country another way he contacted the French government with a proposal to better coordinate war supplies with Britain. This proposal met with approval and the French President made him an economic intermediary between France and its allies.

Having shown great professional aptitude during the war, at the age of 31 he was named Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations upon its creation in 1919. When his father died in 1923 he returned to Cognac and successfully turned around the fortunes of the declining family business. Over the next few years, his experience in international finance also saw him become closely involved with the reorganisation of the national finances of various eastern European countries such as Romania and Poland, advising the Chinese government, assisting with the reorganisation of their railway network, and helping to set up a bank in San Francisco.

Second World War

At the beginning of the Second World War, Monnet again offered his services to his country and became President of

a Franco-British committee set up to coordinate the combining of the two countries' production capacities. He convinced the British and French leaders, Churchill and de Gaulle, to form a complete political union between the two countries to fight Nazism, but the plan failed at the last moment.

Monnet Plan

Thereafter Monnet offered his services to the British government who sent him to the United States to oversee the purchase of war supplies. Impressing American President Roosevelt, he soon became one of his trusted advisers and urged him to expand the production capacity for military equipment in the United States even before the US entered the war.

In 1943, Monnet became a member of the French Committee of National Liberation, the de facto French government in exile in Algiers. It was at this time that he first became explicit about his vision for a union of Europe to regain and retain peace. During a meeting of this committee on 5 August 1943, Monnet declared: "There will be no peace in Europe, if the states are reconstituted on the basis of national sovereignty... The countries of Europe are too small to guarantee their peoples the necessary prosperity and social development. The European states must constitute themselves into a federation..." In 1944 he took charge of the national modernisation and development plan aimed at reviving the French economy and rebuilding the country after the war.



Jean Monnet starts the first production of cast iron under the European Coal and Steel Community.

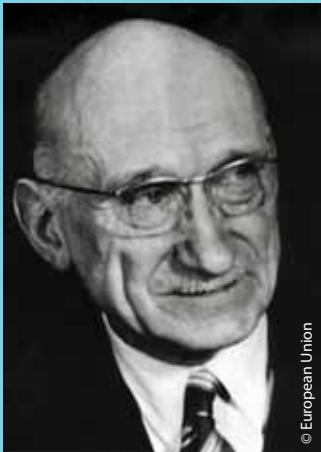
Schuman Declaration

After his plan was accepted and executed he began to realise however that European reconstruction and integration were not taking shape as quickly as he would have liked, and in the way he believed to be right. Under growing international tensions, Monnet recognised that it was time to take real steps towards European unity and he and his team began work on the concept of a European Community. On 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered the so-called 'Schuman Declaration' in the name of the French government. This Declaration was instigated and prepared by Monnet and proposed to place all German-French production of coal and steel under one High Authority. The idea behind this was that if the production of these resources was shared by the two most powerful countries on the continent, it would prevent any future war. As the governments of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg replied favourably, this declaration laid the basis for the European Coal and Steel Community, the predecessor to the European Economic Community and subsequent European Union.

After the failure in 1954 to create a 'European Defence Community', Monnet founded the 'Action Committee for the United States of Europe'. This committee was set up to revive the spirit of European integration and became one of the main driving forces behind many of the developments in European integration such as the creation of the Common Market, the European Monetary System, the summits in the European Council and election to the European Parliament by universal suffrage.

Despite finishing formal education at the age of 16 and against all odds, Jean Monnet became a man of many roles: international businessman, financier, diplomat and statesman. However, he was never elected to any public office and therefore never had the formal political power to enforce his views. It was through his gift of argument and persuasion that he convinced European leaders to work towards common interests and to understand the benefits of cooperation.

Robert Schuman: the architect of the European integration project



Robert Schuman 1886 - 1963

The statesman Robert Schuman, a qualified lawyer and French foreign minister between 1948 and 1952, is regarded as one of the founding fathers of European unity.

Schuman was born in Luxembourg and was influenced by his background in the French-German border region. Despite, or maybe as a result of his experiences in Nazi Germany, he recognised that only a lasting reconciliation with Germany could form the basis for a united Europe. Deported to Germany in 1940, he joined the French Resistance upon fleeing two years later. In spite of this, he showed no resentment when, following the war, he became foreign minister.

In cooperation with Jean Monnet he drew up the internationally renowned Schuman Plan, which he published on 9 May 1950, the date now regarded as the birth of the European Union. He proposed joint control of coal and steel production, the most important materials for the armaments industry. The basic idea was that whoever did not have control over coal and steel production would not be able to fight a war.

Schuman informed the German chancellor Adenauer of the plan, who immediately recognised the opportunity for a peaceful Europe and agreed. Shortly afterwards, the governments of Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands also reacted. The six states signed the agreement for the European Coal and Steel Community in Paris in April 1951. In this way, Europe began as a peace initiative.

Schuman also supported the formation of a common European defence policy, and held the post of President of the European Parliament from 1958 to 1960.

Early life

Robert Schuman had a truly European background: born on 29 June 1886 in Luxembourg, his father was a Frenchman who became German when the region he lived in was annexed by Germany, whilst his mother was Luxembourgish. Schuman himself, however, was born a German citizen. When in 1919, after the First World War, the region of Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, he became French.

Before the war he studied law, economics, political philosophy, theology and statistics at the Universities of Bonn, Munich, Berlin

and Strasbourg, and received a law degree with the highest distinction from Strasbourg University. After graduation, he set up his own law practice in Metz in 1912. Two years later the First World War broke out. Schuman was excused from military service on medical grounds. When the war ended he became active in politics, starting his career in public service as a member of the French Parliament for the Moselle region.

When the Second World War began Schuman was a junior minister in the French government. He became active in

the French resistance during the war and was taken prisoner. Narrowly escaping deportation to the Dachau concentration camp, he fled to the 'free' zone of France where he went into hiding after the Nazis invaded the zone. In hiding, with a 100 000 Reichsmark reward on his head, he defied the Germans for the next three years. He declined the invitation of French leader-in-exile de Gaulle to go to London, preferring instead to stay with his compatriots in Nazi-occupied France.

After the war he returned to national politics in a series of top-level posts: firstly as Minister of Finance, as Prime Minister in 1947, Foreign Minister from 1948-1952 and again as Minister of Finance from 1955-56. He became a key negotiator of major treaties and initiatives such as the Council of Europe, the Marshall Plan and NATO: all initiatives aimed at increased cooperation within the western alliance and to unite Europe. But what Schuman became most known for is what is now called the 'Schuman Declaration' in which he proposed to Germany and the rest of the European countries to work together towards a merger of their economic interests. He was convinced that when these were tied together, it would render war 'not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible'.

The Schuman Declaration

In a speech delivered on 9 May 1950, inspired and for the most part drafted by Jean Monnet, Schuman proposed to place Franco-German production of coal and steel under one common High Authority. This organisation would be open to participation to other European countries.

This cooperation was to be designed in such a way as to create common interests between European countries which would lead to gradual political integration, a condition for the pacification of relations between them: "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity. The coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany".

His speech did not fall on deaf ears, as German Chancellor Adenauer responded swiftly with a positive reply as did the governments of the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg. Within one year, on 18 April 1951, the six founding members signed the Treaty of Paris. It created the European Coal and Steel Community - Europe's first supranational Community. This ground-breaking organisation paved the way for the European Economic Community and subsequently the European Union, which is still run by the innovative type of European institutions conceived in 1950.

However, his efforts did not stop there. He became a great proponent of further integration through a European Defence Community and in 1958 he became the first President of the predecessor to the current European Parliament. When he left office the Parliament bestowed on him the title of 'Father of Europe'. Because of the significance of his 'Schuman Declaration' on 9 May 1950, this day has been designated as 'Europe Day'. And, in honour of his pioneering work towards a united Europe, the district housing the headquarters of several European Union institutions in Brussels is named after him.



Schuman giving his famous speech on 9 May 1950, the day that is now celebrated as the EU's birthday.

Paul-Henri Spaak: a European visionary and talented persuader



Paul-Henri Spaak 1899 - 1972

'A European statesman' – Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak's long political career fully merits this title.

Lying about his age, he was accepted into the Belgian Army during the First World War, and consequently spent two years as a German prisoner of war. During the Second World War, now as foreign minister, he attempted in vain to preserve Belgium's neutrality. Together with the government he went into exile, first to Paris, and later to London.

After the liberation of Belgium, Spaak served both as Foreign Minister and as Prime Minister. Even during the Second World War, he had formulated plans for a merger of the Benelux countries, and directly after the war he campaigned for the unification of Europe, supporting the European Coal and Steel Community and a European defence community.

For Spaak, uniting countries through binding treaty obligations was the most effective means of guaranteeing peace and stability. He was able to help achieve these aims as president of the first full meeting of the United Nations (1946) and as Secretary General of NATO (1957-61).

Spaak was a leading figure in formulating the content of the Treaty of Rome. At the 'Messina Conference' in 1955, the six participating governments appointed him president of the working committee that prepared the Treaty.

Rise through Belgian politics

Born on 25 January 1899 in Schaerbeek, Belgium, Paul-Henri Spaak was brought up in a prominent politically active Belgian family. His grandfather, Paul Janson, was a distinguished member of the Liberal Party whilst his socialist mother, Marie Janson, became the first woman in the Belgian Senate. He also had an uncle in politics, Paul-Emile Janson, who was Prime Minister of Belgium in the late 1930s.

Spaak joined the Belgian army during the First World War, after lying about his age. However, he was soon captured by the

Germans and spent the next two years imprisoned in a war camp. After the war, Spaak studied law. At this time, he also developed a love of sport, even playing for the Belgian tennis team in the 1922 Davis Cup tournament.

After receiving his degree, Spaak entered a law practice in Brussels. In 1920 he became a member of the Socialist Belgian Labour Party. He made a swift rise through national politics to become Belgium's Prime Minister in 1938. During the Second World War he was Foreign Minister in the Belgian government-in-exile

in London. When he returned to Brussels in 1944, he served in post-war governments both as Foreign and Prime Minister. In 1945 Spaak rose to international prominence on his election as Chairman of the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. In 1956 he was chosen by the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to be its Secretary General.

Contribution to Europe

Spaak was famous for his talented rhetoric: he was someone who was able to make people listen, and he possessed the art of persuasion. These talents, combined with his vision of European cooperation, made him one of the greatest contributors to the project of European integration.

Forming the Benelux

Although most of Europe was in ruins after the Second World War, Spaak saw an opportunity to make Europe a strong continent again through economic and political cooperation. The war made it clear in his mind that working together towards a common goal was far more productive than fighting each other. Spaak was one of the men we now consider as a Founding Father of the EU because he saw the potential in unifying post-war Europe. A testament to this is the forming of the Benelux in 1944.

While Spaak worked from London, on the continent the war was running its destructive course. But, together with his colleagues from the Netherlands and Luxembourg, Spaak was working on a completely new and highly ambitious project. In 1944, the Benelux was born: the customs union between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. It was a simple idea, but never seen or done before. Within the borders of the three countries, free traffic of money, people, services and goods would be guaranteed: an inspiration for further European integration.

The Messina Conference

In 1955, the Messina Conference of European leaders chose Spaak as chairman of a committee (the Spaak Committee) in charge

of the preparation of a report on the creation of this common European market. During the Messina Conference the three Benelux states proposed a relaunch of European integration to come about on the basis of a common market and integration in the sectors of transport and atomic energy. This 'Spaak Report' was the basis of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Common Market and Euratom in 1956, and led to the Treaties of Rome, signed on 25 March 1957, establishing a European Economic Community in 1958. Spaak signed the treaty for Belgium.

Throughout his political life, Spaak always defended the importance of European integration and the independence of the European Commission with great vigour: "The Europe of tomorrow must be a supranational Europe," he stated to rebuff French President de Gaulle's 1962 'Fouchet Plan', attempting to block both the British entry to the European Communities and undermine their supranational foundation. The European unity Spaak envisaged was mostly economic. The Belgian statesman desired political unification but not on the basis of the Common Market countries alone. He was therefore against any further actions until economic integration of Britain into the union had taken place. He retired from politics in 1966 and died in Brussels in 1972.

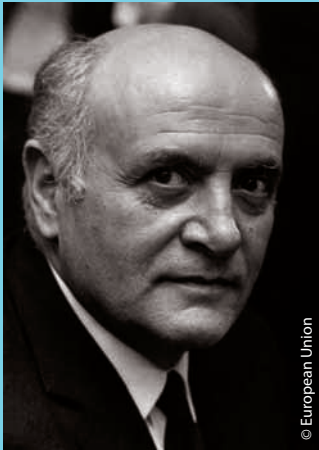


Spaak signing a European treaty on behalf of Belgium in 1965.

A staunch European

Spaak has been written into the history books as the driving force behind European integration. Even before the actual start of any European economic and political cooperation, he believed in the European project. He was a staunch European and looked beyond the borders of his own country.

Altiero Spinelli: an unrelenting federalist



Altiero Spinelli 1907 - 1986

The Italian politician Altiero Spinelli was one of the fathers of the European Union. He was the leading figure behind the European Parliament's proposal for a Treaty on a federal European Union - the so-called 'Spinelli Plan'. This was adopted in 1984 by an overwhelming majority in the Parliament and provided an important inspiration for the strengthening of the EU Treaties in the 1980s and '90s.

As a 17-year old, Spinelli joined the Communist Party, as a consequence of which he was imprisoned by the Italian fascist regime between 1927 and 1943. At the end of the Second World War, he established the Federalist Movement in Italy.

In his role as advisor to personalities such as De Gasperi, Spaak and Monnet, he worked for European unification. A trained juror, he also furthered the European cause in the academic field, and created the Institute for International Affairs in Rome.

As a member of the European Commission he took over the area of internal policy from 1970 to 1976.

For three years he served as a Member of the Italian Parliament for the Communist Party before being elected to the European Parliament in 1979.

Early life

Altiero Spinelli was born in Rome on 31 August 1907 into a socialist family. He became politically active in the Italian Communist Party at a very early age. In 1926, as a result of his activities within the Communist Party, he was arrested and convicted by Mussolini's Fascist Special Tribunal and sentenced to 16 years and 8 months' detention. Ten of these years were spent in prison and a further six in confinement. Throughout all of this time he refused to renounce his ideals and repent, even though this would have resulted in a pardon. Whilst in prison he studied fervently and became a passionate advocate of supranational integration. He criticised some of the Communist Party's political positions. His disillusionment with the Party and the insights he had gained during his studies led to him abandoning the Communists and joining the Federalist cause. It was during the period that he was

held captive on the small island of Ventotene that his Federalist ideas began to take shape. He became increasingly convinced that a European-wide movement towards federalism would help to counteract the destructive force of nationalism.

The Ventotene Manifesto

During his time on Ventotene, Spinelli read the works of several federalist theorists. Inspired by their thoughts and ideas he drew up, together with other political prisoners, the Ventotene Manifesto in which he set out the focus of his federalist vision and the future of Europe. This Manifesto is one of the first documents arguing for a European constitution. Initially called

'Towards a Free and United Europe', the manifesto states that any victory over fascist powers would be useless, if it led to nothing more than establishing another version of the old European system of sovereign nation-states, but just in different alliances. This would only lead to another world war. The manifesto proposed the formation of a supranational European federation of states, the primary goal of which was to connect European states to such an extent that it would be impossible to enter into war ever again.

The Federalist Movement

After his release from confinement in 1943, his writings served as the programme for the Movimento Federalista Europeo (Federalist Movement of Europe) which he created the same year. Throughout the rest of the 1940s and '50s, Spinelli became a staunch advocate of the Federalist cause of a united Europe. During this period he criticised the lack of progress in attempts to achieve European integration. He believed that intergovernmental cooperation with full national sovereignty in organisations like the OECD and the Council of Europe was not sufficient. For this reason, he was steadfastly committed to further integration. For instance, as political adviser to the then Italian Prime Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, he persuaded him to push for the forming of a European Defence Community, although it ultimately failed, much to Spinelli's disappointment.

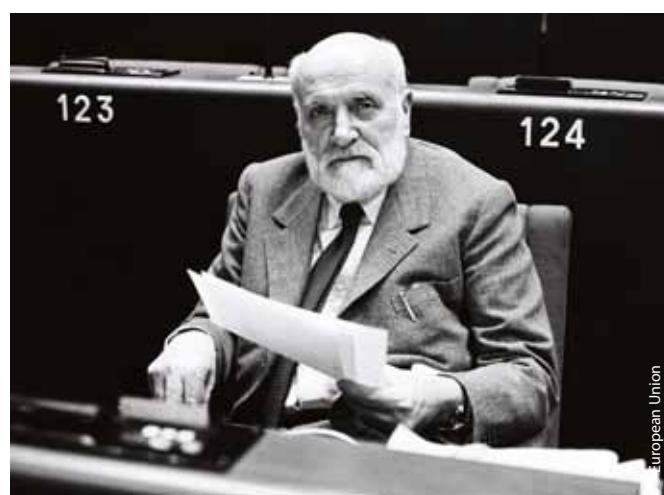
The Crocodile Club

During the 1960s, Spinelli was a government adviser and researcher, established the Institute of International Affairs in Rome, and was a member of the European Commission from 1970 until 1976. In 1979 he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament. As an MEP he once again seized the chance to promote his Federalist vision of Europe. In 1980, together with other Federalist-minded MEPs, he founded 'The Crocodile Club', named after the restaurant in Strasbourg they frequented. The Crocodile Club wanted a new European treaty. The members tabled a motion for the Parliament to set up a special committee to draft a proposal for a new treaty on the European Union, to be anything but in name a constitution of Europe.

The Spinelli Plan

On 14 February 1984, the European Parliament adopted his proposal with an overwhelming majority and approved the 'Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union', the so-called 'Spinelli Plan'. Although national parliaments failed to endorse the treaty, the document did provide a basis for the Single European Act of 1986 which opened up the national borders for the common market, and for the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 forming the European Union. Spinelli's enthusiasm convinced French President Mitterrand to promote the reversal of French hostility towards anything other than an intergovernmental approach to Europe. This provided the momentum in a number of European governments to propel the European integration process further.

Although not all of his ambitious ideas became reality, Altiero Spinelli relentlessly pursued his goal of a European supranational government to prevent further wars and to join the countries of this continent into a united Europe. His thoughts inspired many changes in the European Union, in particular major increases of powers to the European Parliament. And the Federalist movement still holds regular meetings on the tiny island of Ventotene. Altiero Spinelli died in 1986 and the main building of the European Parliament in Brussels is named after him.



Spinelli in the European Parliament, shortly after it adopted his plan for a federal Europe in 1984.



The founding fathers of the EU

Over half a century ago a number of visionary leaders inspired the creation of the European Union we live in today. Without their energy and motivation we would not be living in the sphere of peace and stability that we take for granted. From resistance fighters to lawyers, the founding fathers were a diverse group of people who held the same ideals: a peaceful, united and prosperous Europe. This collection tells the story behind 11 of the EU's founding fathers. Many others have worked tirelessly towards and inspired the European project.

Konrad Adenauer
Joseph Bech
Johan Willem Beyen
Winston Churchill
Alcide De Gasperi
Walter Hallstein
Sicco Mansholt
Jean Monnet
Robert Schuman
Paul-Henri Spaak
Altiero Spinelli

Find out more

- ▶ The official website on the **EU's history**, where you can see videos of the founding fathers and much more:
http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm
- ▶ **Questions about the European Union? Europe Direct** can help:
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