

## 'Twenty years ago, the first European Community was born: the ECSC' from 30 jours d'Europe (October 1972)

**Caption:** In October 1972, the monthly publication 30 jours d'Europe comments on how the High Authority was established in Luxembourg.

**Source:** 30 jours d'Europe. dir. de publ. Fontaine, François ; Réd. Chef Chastenet, Antoine. Octobre 1972, n° 171. Paris: Bureau d'information des Communautés européennes. "Il y a 20 ans naissait la première Communauté européenne: la CECA", auteur:Fontaine, François , p. 25.

**Copyright:** (c) Translation 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/twenty\\_years\\_ago\\_the\\_first\\_european\\_community\\_was\\_born\\_the\\_esc\\_from\\_30\\_jours\\_d\\_europe\\_october\\_1972-en-05d483d3-b7cf-4b9a-ae60-0dco6dd50a49.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/twenty_years_ago_the_first_european_community_was_born_the_esc_from_30_jours_d_europe_october_1972-en-05d483d3-b7cf-4b9a-ae60-0dco6dd50a49.html)



**Last updated:** 06/07/2016

## Twenty years ago, the first European Community was born: the ECSC

[...]

On this day in August 1952, the people of Luxembourg woke up to find their city overrun by commandos from five countries who had slipped in overnight. The city squares were unusually noisy for a Sunday morning, and cars with foreign number plates sped across the Adolphe Bridge, ignoring all speed limits. Unidentified individuals took control of some public buildings. The people of Luxembourg were no longer in familiar surroundings; they were in Europe.

### **Luxembourg, the provisional seat**

A month earlier, they had been warned that a combined operation was being planned and that it would be played out in Luxembourg. But they had not realised its scale nor the impact it would have on their peace and quiet. They were delighted to learn that, in Paris, their Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Bech, after a struggle of epic proportions, had succeeded in having the seat of the first European institution located in their country. It represented a great moral victory for the smallest country in the European Coal and Steel Community which benefited from the rivalry between the larger powers even before the adventure had started.

For hours on end, six Ministers meeting in a room in the Quai d'Orsay on 25 July had haggled for the honour, or the financial benefits, of having the fledgling High Authority located in their own country. Liège, Brussels, Turin, Saarbrücken, Strasbourg: each in turn almost became the capital of the new Europe. In the early hours of the morning, when they had all exhausted their ammunition, the ageing Mr Bech pretended to emerge from his slumber to suggest a temporary solution. 'Since we need to start working somewhere,' he said, 'I invite you to start in Luxembourg. We'll see how things go later.'

He had enrolled Mr Schuman, a Luxembourger by birth, as his accomplice. Everyone was relieved. It gave them the time to settle the Saar issue and, perhaps, to make it a European territory within a few months.

So they were going to spend the summer in a pretty little town that few of the politicians or experts who made up the advance parties had ever visited. Some had gone to inspect their new quarters and had found them dreadfully uncomfortable. But it was sunny, the forests were splendid, and it was only a temporary arrangement.

The delegate from Luxembourg at the Paris talks, Mr Wehrer, had discreetly commandeered a few floors in the building that housed the railway company. He was a diplomat. His words, too, were, 'We'll see how things go.' But some others were already saying that 'nothing is quite so permanent as a temporary arrangement.' Later on, many Luxembourgers were alarmed and commented, nostalgically, 'Had we but known ...' Then, when Brussels' star began to eclipse theirs, they complained, saying, 'They wanted to come here, so they should jolly well stay.'

Today, it is hard for them to imagine that their European destiny was the result of a sly nod and a wink between two old men pretending to be asleep.

[...]