

## The Gstaad Conference

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## Gstaad

The desire to turn federalist ideas into reality inspired some members of parliament to create pro-European groups within national parliaments. For example, in February 1947, British MPs formed the Federalist Group of the House of Commons. Three months later, Winston Churchill became leader of the United Europe Movement, which united senior British politicians and businessmen who advocated a fairly flexible European confederation modelled on the British Commonwealth. Then, on 19 June 1947, on the initiative of the Union of European Federalists (UEF), French Members of Parliament formed the French Federalist Parliamentary Group. Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands soon followed suit.

In July 1947, at a Conference held in Gstaad, Switzerland, these pro-European parliamentary groups met for the first time under the name of the European Parliamentary Union (EPU). This event was the result of an initiative undertaken by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the charismatic founder and organiser of the pan-European Union of the inter-war years. In October 1946, he had sent a questionnaire to more than 4 000 Western European members of parliament about the establishment of a European federation within the framework of the United Nations. He received many positive replies, and that quickly led him to consider setting up a cross-party parliamentary committee in each House, responsible for appointing a European Congress that might act as a precursor to a true Council of Europe, for which Coudenhove had been calling for nearly 30 years.

Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi organised the first EPU Congress from 8 to 10 September 1947, once again in Gstaad. 114 European members of parliament and senators from 10 countries debated the most effective ways of promoting European federalism. They decided to act through federal parliamentary groups and to draw up a draft – federal or confederal – European Constitution comprising an executive, a legislature and a judiciary, as well as a common European currency.