

Statement by Pierre Werner on the merger of the executives (Luxembourg, 27 January 1964)

Caption: On 27 January 1964, Pierre Werner, Minister without portfolio and leader of the Luxembourg Government, issues a statement on the problem of merging the European executives and on its implications for Luxembourg.

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The merger of the European executive bodies and the position of the Luxembourg Government

Last Monday, the Government discussed the merger of the executive bodies and the consequences thereof. However, its formal position will not be made public until the Ministers meet in Brussels on 22 February next. Some elements of Luxembourg's position are, however, already apparent. Many people in political and parliamentary circles regard the proposed merger of the executive bodies, the aim of which is to streamline their services, as a matter of great political importance that must be given priority attention.

Although somewhat sceptical about some of the consequences of the merger, from the outset Luxembourg has adopted a positive attitude on the principle and has agreed to work with its partners to find a solution.

I said earlier that we were a little sceptical about the possible consequences and outcome of the merger because we felt that the problem was complex and entailed certain political consequences, which were all the more likely because it had been decided to regard it as a step towards the merger of the Communities. We were very wary about the political consequences, and that is why we requested a preliminary study of all the political, legal, institutional and practical ramifications so that, when the time came, we could make an informed decision.

The decision concerning the study was made, as you know, on 24 September 1963, and the study was recently completed by the Permanent Representatives. They sent a report to the Council of Ministers that was somewhat incomplete, because the Permanent Representatives did not entirely follow their instructions.

During these dealings and on other occasions, we pointed out that any solution to the problem of the executive bodies' merger obviously and inevitably raised the issue of the place for the new body. Obviously, when you create a new body, it must be anchored somewhere. If it has specific responsibilities and powers, as well as political commitments to fulfil, it must unavoidably be attached to a particular seat.

We therefore draw attention to the fact that there is an unavoidable and necessary connection between the merger of the executive bodies and the location of the Community's bodies and institutions. Unless we want to turn a blind eye, that is inevitable. I have the impression that our partners are conscious of that. The Representatives were also instructed to draw up a report on that subject. Their report, drawn up more in the form of a questionnaire, acknowledges the key importance of this issue for Luxembourg but offers no solutions. You might recall that Luxembourg submitted some suggestions on how to boost the powers and responsibilities of the European Parliament, forming a link between this issue and the merger of the executive bodies. All in all, a range of suggestions has been put forward on this matter.

Since Luxembourg will not be announcing its position to its partners until 22 February, what initial thoughts could we put forward in the interim?

The Luxembourg Government is willing to discuss with its partners the findings of the studies conducted by the Permanent Representatives. That is a given, because the findings show that the merger is possible without too much political turmoil and, apart from being rational, it could also prove to be a practical move.

But the Luxembourg Government will almost certainly express two fundamental reservations. Since the aim of the merger of the executive bodies is to strengthen the Communities in a practical and functional way but also in a political sense, the Luxembourg Government would like to discuss those two fundamental aspects so that the procedure is clear and unambiguous. We believe that we should at least hold a discussion on these issues, because there will be unforeseeable consequences.

I have already hinted at the second reservation. It derives from the very nature of things. Any solution for the merger of the executive bodies implies an intergovernmental agreement, either before or at the same time as the location of the institutions. We feel that we can discuss with our partners any solution that makes allowances for our moral rights and that provides political and economic guarantees that are conducive to a satisfactory solution. If such a solution does not include the continued presence of the ECSC in

Luxembourg, then the only alternative would be the replacement of the ECSC by a body with comparable political prestige able to achieve analogous tangible results. I think that what I have just spelled out is quite clear and precise and points to the equivalent weight of a political body located in Luxembourg.