

The white pool

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Benefiting from the decisive thrust that the Schuman Plan seemed to have given to European sectoral integration, the French Government launched an original plan for a European Public Health Community in September 1952. It proposed that the Member States of the OEEC should establish a common market in medicines and medico-surgical materials and harmonise their research programmes into drug addiction, epidemics and alcoholism. Besides the adoption of a European pharmacopoeia, the 'white pool' plan also recommended the establishment of common hospital structures and the exchange of medical documentation, together with the organisation of research into sanitary conditions and the social legislation of Member States. This programme was put forward in addition to the current European activities of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The white pool was the subject of a conference convened in Paris on 12 and 13 December 1952 with representatives from the six Member States of the ECSC, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. They discussed the preliminary draft treaty, which was presented by Paul Ribeyre, French Minister for Public Health and the Population. But this proposal was vigorously opposed by the pharmaceutical laboratories and by the cotton industry, since both these hospital suppliers were totally hostile to any supranational solution. The plan was then entrusted to the Council of Europe, but it never became a reality.