

Euratom

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The negotiations preceding the establishment of the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) were long and difficult. They accurately illustrated the extent to which national interests on this matter differed. In October 1956, the heads of the delegations at the Intergovernmental Conference of the Six instructed Louis Armand (President of the French national railways), Franz Etzel (Vice-President of the ECSC High Authority) and Francesco Giordani (former President of the Italian Committee for Nuclear Research) to draw up a report on Europe's requirements and potential for generating electricity from nuclear energy. In May 1957, the report of the 'Three Wise Men' – entitled 'A Target for Euratom' – noted the extent to which European countries were dependent on oil from the Middle East: the Six were responsible for just 15% of the world's energy production. The aim, therefore, was to prevent oil from becoming a device for exerting international pressure. The document anticipated energy imports into Europe doubling, even tripling over the next few years. Accordingly, it recommended the building of nuclear power stations as a gradual replacement for those running on coal and oil. Europe's international independence and prestige were at stake.

During diplomatic discussions between the Six, France clearly indicated to its partners that it gave priority to the Euratom project rather than to the plan for a common market. However, in 1956, the Suez Crisis caused major difficulties in the supply of petroleum products to Europe. European unity therefore proved essential to ensure a degree of European autonomy in terms of energy. As a result, France agreed to grant concessions to its partners with regard to the common market, and Germany took a more conciliatory line towards Euratom. Negotiations resumed and resulted in the signing of the Euratom Treaty on 25 March 1957 in Rome.