

1950–1954 The formation of the community of Europe

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The pioneering period, when everything still seemed possible, was also the period when some impulsive ideas, bearing the imprint of hastiness or utopianism, fell victim to events or to the inertia of governments. It was followed by a period when more tangible achievements were able to take shape. Recourse to consensus and intergovernmental methods gave way to initiatives of a kind that gave hope to a supranational approach. The fledgling European Community, born of the Schuman Plan, took its first steps and began to acquire organisational shape. Everyone observed with interest the ever closer relationship between the age-old enemies, France and Germany, and it attracted other countries that were also tempted by the European venture. While Central and Eastern Europe lived under the yoke of Communist regimes that owed allegiance to the Soviet Union, the Six of Western Europe decided to take their fate into their own hands and tentatively explored new forms of sectoral cooperation that might lead to greater things. Agriculture, transport and public health seemed to be areas where sectoral integration might be possible.