

Address given by Joseph Bech at the Venice Conference (29 May 1956)

Caption: On 29 May 1956, during the Venice Conference on the revival of European integration, Joseph Bech, Luxembourg Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, sets out the stance of his Government on the Spaak Report, the Common Market project and the Euratom project.

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Organisations internationales. Conférence intergouvernementale pour le Marché commun et l'Euratom. Conférence des ministres des Affaires étrangères à Venise en mai 1956, AE 7690.

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Allow me to express my appreciation to all who have worked on and helped prepare the report we are now examining, to the heads of delegation, their experts and the Secretariat. I would like to congratulate above all the political coordinator, Mr Spaak, for having obtained such a remarkable result. His personal contribution, talent, experience and endless enthusiasm are much appreciated.

Since publication of the report, the Luxembourg Government has undertaken some preliminary consultations of professional and economic organisations. It would obviously be premature to draw any firm conclusions from these contacts, since the experts' report has only been available for a few weeks. However, I can say that, in general, the organisations consulted take a positive attitude to the report.

More precisely, with reference to the Common Market, there is recognition that the sacrifices required by this vast project should be made. But it is also stressed that structural changes likely to endanger the very existence of one of the Member States must be avoided at all costs.

I must therefore remind you of the main and almost only preoccupation of our Government, which can be summarised as follows: the establishment of the Common Market can in no way be allowed to result in the disappearance, pure and simple, of the agricultural community of my country.

This particular problem is mentioned in the relevant sections of the Spaak Report, and I feel I can have confidence in the Treaty negotiators to take this fundamental demand into account when drawing up the texts. I must state quite frankly that the final attitude of the Government and Parliament of Luxembourg towards the Common Market will depend on it.

The institutional problems are not yet dealt with in detail in the report of the heads of delegation. I have already had occasion to state that my Government will willingly accept a reasonable weighting in the composition of the community bodies according to the interests at stake, always provided, of course, that the provisions of the future treaty do not establish any fundamental inequalities in the representation of States or the participation of their nationals in the main executive bodies.

As far as Euratom is concerned, the technical and scientific contribution my country could make is so small that I would simply like to note our agreement of principle with the contents of the Spaak Report. Our Government will willingly participate, to the extent of its possibilities, in a project that is not only full of promise for the economic and social development of Europe, but will also, in our view, make an extremely important contribution to revitalising the movement towards European integration. That, more than ever before, must be the ultimate goal of all our efforts.