

Address by Enrico Gibellieri (Luxembourg, 27 June 2002)

Caption: On 27 June 2002, Enrico Gibellieri, the last President of the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), delivers an address on the occasion of the formal session to bring the Committee's work to a close and to mark the expiry of the ECSC Treaty 50 years after it came into force.

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Address given by Enrico Gibellieri, Chairman of the ECSC Consultative Committee

Your Royal Highness
Madam Minister for Foreign Affairs
Mr Quaestor of the European Parliament
Madam President of the 'Industry' Council
Madam Vice-President of the European Commission
Members of the High Authority,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues,

It is a great honour for me and it is with deep emotion that I close this solemn session that concludes the activities of the Consultative Committee and marks the end of the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty 50 years after it entered into force.

Although that may not seem long today, in fact the founding fathers of the European Coal and Steel Community were being extremely optimistic in setting a term for the Treaty that was more than twice as long as the period between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Second.

It is thanks to many of you that that optimistic ideal has been achieved.

I should like in particular to stress that this session is being held in the city of Luxembourg, the historic home of the ECSC, in the building that housed one of its most important institutions.

The ECSC Treaty played a fundamental part in the development of the coal and steel industries, providing the High Authority and the European Commission with the instruments to create a real and genuinely European industrial policy.

It also put the dignity of workers and their families and communities on the same level as the objectives of technological and economic progress. The ECSC Treaty has a soul.

It was particularly effective when it came to managing the serious crises that arose in both sectors as a result of restructuring, which took a very high social toll, crises that were successfully dealt with thanks to the Treaty instruments which, among other things, allowed continuous innovation in processes and products in the ECSC sectors.

The research and innovation programmes, the staff training and retraining programmes, the instruments to deal with social problems, the policy of loans to support investment, the building programmes, the policy on prices and competition, the statistics and the structured sectoral dialogue: all these proved to be efficient instruments of a single coherent development policy.

Research also contributed to a substantial improvement in working conditions and in production technologies compatible with environmental requirements, anticipating the social and economic measures that were to be taken much later in other sectors.

Lastly, the ECSC Treaty was the first to introduce sectoral dialogue at European level among the parties concerned by establishing the ECSC Consultative Committee, a body comprising representatives of producers, workers, consumers and dealers in the two sectors.

As the last Chairman of the Consultative Committee, the only ECSC institution still existing in its original form, I should like to draw attention to the decisive part this body has played in achieving the objectives of the Treaty.

In this forum, the principal players in the coal and steel sector have met, worked, talked and taken decisions, and have been able and willing to set aside their own national and party differences with the higher common

interests of Europe in mind.

This encouraging experience helped to define a model of social dialogue at European level, which has been incorporated in subsequent Treaties and gradually extended to other sectors and to inter-professional relations.

The Consultative Committee has given voice to the commitment of generations of entrepreneurs, workers, technicians, researchers, managers and trade union representatives in the sectors concerned who, together with the local, national and European institutions, provided the groundwork of the ECSC.

It has played an active part for fifty years in the life of the two sectors, originally the most important sectors of the European economy, both in the exciting period of development and through the serious crises and subsequent restructuring, with the terrible social toll it exacted.

At the end of this long process, we have two industries of the highest level in respect of technology, compatibility with environmental requirements, working conditions, the professional quality of the workforce and the competitiveness of the undertakings.

The legacy of the ECSC experience will not be dissipated but put to good use in continuing:

— research activity through the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel;

— structured sectoral dialogue through the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change in the coal and steel sector under the aegis of the Economic and Social Committee, with a view to transferring the ECSC model of sectoral action to the other major sectors of European industry.

I must also emphasise that this experience will be of great value and importance to the enlargement of the European Union, given the industrial and social problems currently facing the applicant countries.

It seems appropriate at this point to recall what Jean Monnet said on 26 January 1953, speaking in his capacity as President of the High Authority at the first meeting of the ECSC Consultative Committee:

‘We are at the beginning of a great enterprise that we must carry through together. Only if our action leads to improved production, if it assures all consumers free access to all sources of supply at low prices and without discrimination, and only if it results in an improvement in living and working conditions, will we be able to say we have succeeded.’

It is with great and justifiable pride that we can now, at last, say that we have succeeded.

But the task that the founding fathers of the ECSC Treaty set for our industrial sectors was much greater and much more ambitious. This is clear from the first page of the Treaty which, after listing the Heads of State of the six founding Member States, reads as follows:

‘CONSIDERING that world peace can be safeguarded only by creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it,

CONVINCED that the contribution which an organised and vital Europe can make to civilisation is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations,

RECOGNISING that Europe can be built only through practical achievements which will first of all create real solidarity, and through the establishment of common bases for economic development,

ANXIOUS to help, by expanding their basic production, to raise the standard of living and further the works of peace,

RESOLVED to substitute for age-old rivalries the merging of their essential interests; to create, by establishing an economic community, the basis for a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts; and to lay the foundations for institutions which will give direction to a destiny henceforward shared,

HAVE DECIDED to create a European Coal and Steel Community.'

It is with great pride that I stand here today, representing the generations of entrepreneurs, workers, technicians, researchers, trade union representatives and managers who, from the smelting floors in the blast furnaces to the depths of the coal mines, were able and willing to take the first step on the long hard road that has transformed two war industries into peace industries, starting the process that has culminated 50 years later in peace and a single European currency.

As the last Chairman of the Consultative Committee, I have chosen to start the ECSC Treaty closing ceremony by paying homage to the 262 workers who died in 1956 in the Marcinelle pit, in remembrance of all those who have lost their lives or their health working in our industries.

My thoughts turn to them as I close this solemn session, which concludes the activities of the Consultative Committee and marks the end of the ECSC Treaty, with a promise that I and all those engaged in the European coal and steel industries will pursue our activities in the future with the same commitment to consolidating and extending European integration and peace in Europe.

Long live the European Coal and Steel Community!

Long live the European Union!