

'Final session of the ECSC Committee on Wednesday' from the Luxemburger Wort

Caption: The final working session of the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) is held on 26 June 2002 in Luxembourg. Its responsibilities are transferred to the Economic and Social Committee (ESC). When the ECSC Treaty expires on 23 July 2002, the financial reserves of the first European Community are to be used for research in the coal and steel industries.

Source: Luxemburger Wort. Für Wahrheit und Recht. 25.06.2002, Nr. 145; Jahrgang 155. Luxemburg: saint-paul luxembourg s.a. "Am Mittwoch letzte Sitzung des CECA-Ausschusses", p. 6.

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Final session of the ECSC Committee on Wednesday

ECSC assets of EUR 1 600 million will benefit research into coal and steel

GeWe — What has served its purpose is then simply discarded. This week, they will be saying goodbye to Luxembourg with somewhat wistful feelings of nostalgia: the 108 members of the Consultative Committee of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which is known as the CECA ('Communauté européenne du charbon et de l'acier') in French. The final working session of this body, which is made up of equal numbers of producers, of workers and of consumers and dealers, will take place in Luxembourg on Wednesday. On Friday, a final ceremonial session will be held.

Yesterday, at a press conference, the President of the ECSC Committee, Enrico Gibellieri, described the Committee that had begun its work in Luxembourg on 23 January 1953 as the nucleus of the modern social dialogue in Europe. It was this nucleus that had ensured that the social needs of Europe had not been subordinated to economic needs. After all, to date, a quarter of a million houses had been built for workers in the coal and steel industries. The funds from the Coal and Steel Community had financed appreciable improvements in the living and working conditions of the people employed in the sector. Since 1955, 1.7 million people had profited from the social policies of the Coal and Steel Community.

In the Preamble to the Treaty, which was concluded on 18 April 1952, the focus is not, incidentally, on coal and steel but on peace. The primary objective of the founding fathers, Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Joseph Bech and others, was in fact the creation of a peaceful future in Europe. The Treaty is the only one of the EU treaties to have a time limit, and it officially expires on 23 July.

The former key sector of coal and steel has, of course, now lost a great deal of its importance, although this does not actually apply so much to steel, if the volume of production is considered. In 1953, the six founding states produced 39.8 million tonnes of raw steel; last year, the Community of Fifteen produced 159 million tonnes. However, the trend in coal output has been in the reverse direction: in the same period, this went down from 248 to 82 million tonnes. There has been a sharp decrease in the number of people employed. In the case of coal, the figure has fallen from the original 955 300 (Europe of the Six) to 87 800 in the Europe of the Fifteen. The number of steelworkers has almost halved from 410 397 to 276 700. In 1973, in the then Community of the Nine, when the industry was at its peak before the steel crisis, as many as three quarters of a million people worked in the steel sector. Coal and steel are regarded as the main raw materials for the armaments industry, and this is why they were placed under the control of a joint High Authority in 1952, in accordance with the Schuman Plan.

The Committee will certainly not be given a first-class funeral. It is true that its objectives have by and large been achieved. However, it will continue to exist in a reduced form and will be under the aegis of the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) in Brussels. There will continue to be 30 representatives recruited from the old ECSC Committee, in addition to which there will be 24 from the ESC. It is planned to hold four plenary sessions each year. The assets of the Coal and Steel Community, however, amounting to EUR 1 600 million, will be transferred to the EU budget, although they will be subject to a specific commitment. 72.8 % of the money will be put into steel development and 27.2 % will go into coal research.

The Member of the Committee for Luxembourg is the Director of the Chamber of Labour, Marcel Detaille.