

## Statement by Sean Lemass (Paris, 14 July 1947)

**Caption:** On 14 July 1947, the second day of the Paris Conference on European Economic Cooperation, Sean Lemass, Head of the Irish delegation, reviews the establishment of a coordinated economic recovery plan for Europe and emphasises Ireland's commitment to the recovery programme.

**Source:** Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo. Dépôts, DEP. Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques, OECD. Committee for European Economic Co-operation, CEEC. CEEC 03.

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## Speech by Mr. Lemass, Vice-President of the Council and Minister for Industries and Trade of Eire, Head of the Irish delegation (Paris, 14th July 1947)

The Government of Ireland gladly welcomed the initiative of the British and French Governments in proposing a conference of European States to take the first steps in a co-ordinated effort to European recovery.

We strongly share the views that have been expressed with regard to the necessity for swift action and the value of combined action. If, by planning European recovery on a wider and sounder basis than could be established by the separate and perhaps conflicting actions of individual states, we can expedite and make more certain the reconstruction and economic development of all European states, it would have been an inexcusable neglect of the interests of our own people, and of the ordinary people everywhere, to have allowed political considerations to have referred us from this course.

We know by theory and experience that we cannot insulate ourselves from the effects of economic decline in other states. That is probably true for all states, but it is unquestionably so for the smaller nations whose power to protect themselves against the repercussions of economic upheavals outside their boundaries is very small, and whose progress must of necessity keep in step with that of their greater neighbours with whom they trade.

We cannot recover the prosperity we seek, or win for our people the high and rising standard of living we wish them to have, merely by the temporary patching up of our own national economies, nor is it sensible to recognize that the causes of our difficulties lie in general world conditions without wanting to do something about it. The development of a co-ordinated plan for the restoration of full productivity in Europe generally, and the expansion of international trade facilitated by confidence in the stability of political and economic conditions is essential to the prosperity of all European countries including our own. That is why we are glad to participate in the work of this conference, which has those objects to achieve.

We will be prepared to consider any proposals which may emerge from the deliberations of the conference as to how we can most effectively increase our contribution to the pool of European resources. At best, our contribution cannot be a large one. We are a small country which only in the comparatively recent past has won its freedom after a long struggle that delayed our economic development, which indeed is still hampered by the division of our national territory. We were engaged in making good the deficiencies in our productive equipment and the defects of our economic organisation when the outbreak of war arrested our efforts. Nevertheless I can undertake that, within the limits of our resources, we will make the maximum effort to help.

We believe that the conference is beginning on the right lines in recognizing that each state is the proper judge of the nature and extent of the contribution it can make. The strongest associations are those that are free. Of our own free decision and in our own interests, we have come here to gain greater strength and wider opportunity to build up our own economy in the secure environment of a prosperous Europe.

The history of efforts towards international co-operation is in the main a story of blighted hopes. The suggestion made by Mr. Secretary of State Marshall does, however, offer to us the prospect of success in our work which entitles us to begin it with optimism. It appears within our power, not merely to facilitate the work of postwar recovery, but also to lay the foundation of a sound European economy which will yield prosperity and security for our peoples in the years ahead when current difficulties of a non-economic character have been overcome. It is our conviction that it is upon such a foundation that our hopes of continuing peace can be most confidently based.

Paris, Quay d'Orsay  
14th July 1947