

The work of the Committee of the Three Wise Men

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In November 1956, the Heads of Delegation of the Six attending the Intergovernmental Conference on the Common Market and Euratom instructed Louis Armand, the Chairman of French Railways (SNCF), Franz Etzel, Vice-President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and Francesco Giordani, the former Chairman of the National Committee for Nuclear Research (CNRN), representing France, Germany and Italy respectively, to draw up a report on how Europe might use nuclear energy to meet its growing energy requirements.

In the course of several months, the Committee of the Three Wise Men met representatives of government and industry who were responsible for atomic energy issues in the six countries. The Committee also stayed in contact with participants in the Intergovernmental Conference at Val Duchesse. At the invitation of the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, the Three Wise Men carried out fact-finding missions relating to work on nuclear energy in the three countries and the lessons to be learned. Lastly, they submitted many questions to the Atomic Energy Commissions in the United States and the United Kingdom, both bodies providing technical data on their respective reactors.

In May 1957, the report of the Three Wise Men entitled *A target for Euratom* — for which the Treaty was signed in Rome on 25 March 1957 at the same time as the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) — indicated that Euratom should promote the mobilisation of the technical and industrial resources in Europe required to develop the energy capacity of the Six. Euratom, the report stressed, was also the political body best placed to provide the necessary guarantees and conclude with the US Government specific agreements on the exchange of data and fissile fuel. The report emphasised the extent to which European countries depended on Middle East oil supplies, with the Six accounting for only 15 % of world energy output. It was consequently important to prevent oil from being used as a means of exerting international pressure. The Three Wise Men forecast that energy imports to Europe would double or perhaps even triple in the foreseeable future. Taking the view that the cost of energy would act as a brake on economic growth and on the improvement of living standards in Europe, the Committee set 1960 as a target beyond which imports of conventional fuels must stop increasing. It therefore recommended that nuclear power stations with a total power rating of 15 million kW should be built as quickly as possible, with a view to the gradual replacement of coal- and oil-powered facilities.