

The work of the Common Market Group

Source: CVCE. European Navigator. Étienne Deschamps.

Copyright: (c) CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_work_of_the_common_market_group-en-568781fa-55e7-4891-a610-907a7c12739a.html

Last updated: 08/07/2016



The work of the Common Market Group

As the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the six Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) had decided at their conference in Venice on 29 and 30 May 1956, the Intergovernmental Conference on the Common Market and Euratom, chaired by Belgium's Foreign Minister, Paul-Henri Spaak, included two groups responsible for studying the technical problems entailed in drafting the Treaties establishing, respectively, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom). Constituted on 26 June 1956 in Brussels, the Common Market Group was chaired by Hans von der Groeben, a director in the German Ministry for Economics. Its work was to take until 23 March 1957, just two days before the signing in Rome of the EEC and Euratom Treaties.

Despite insistent pressure from Spaak, negotiations in the Common Market Group proved much more laborious than those in the Euratom Group. The French and German delegations found it very hard to compromise at all on issues including harmonisation of employment-related costs before the shift to phase two of the Common Market transition period; establishment of the common external tariff (CET); how to link the overseas countries and territories (OCTs) to the EEC; competition rules; and introduction of the institutional system. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French Prime Minister Guy Mollet had to intervene on several occasions to bring about political compromises and prevent the negotiations from grinding to a halt. The French negotiating positions were certainly very restrictive. For example, Paris saw harmonisation of production conditions as a prerequisite for dismantling tariff barriers and opening up the Common Market. Similarly, the French delegation refused to contemplate moving on to stage two until the stage-one objectives had been fully met. Determined to keep the tightest possible rein on its monetary policy, France also set numerous conditions for complete elimination of restrictions on the movement of capital.

Drawing on the Spaak report, the Common Market Group produced detailed provisions for the free movement of persons and workers, freedom of establishment and the free movement of services and capital. However, discussions at Val Duchesse about the competition rules to apply in the Common Market were dominated by national interests and concerns for the competitiveness of national economies. It also proved impossible to provide in the Treaty for development of a common short-term economic policy.