

The follow-up to and the consequences of the Hague Congress

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The work of the Congress of Europe in The Hague resulted in the adoption of three Resolutions on political, economic and social, and cultural issues. In the ensuing months, the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity (ICMEU) set about translating those recommendations into practical steps and action. In October 1948, the ICMEU itself became a European Movement whose objective it was to influence the course of events by exerting constant pressure on the political leaders of the countries of Western Europe and by influencing public opinion in those countries. On the political level, the European Movement adopted the proposed establishment of a Parliamentary Assembly as its main goal. Accordingly, following intensive negotiations, it promoted the establishment of the Council of Europe, whose Statute was signed in London on 5 May 1949. The idea of a Charter and a Court of Human Rights, already considered by various participants at the Hague Congress, quickly gained ground. As a result, on 4 November 1950, in Rome, representatives of the member states of the Council of Europe signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which provided for the establishment of a judicial system designed to ensure the implementation of and compliance with that Convention. On the cultural level, efforts undertaken by the European Movement were successful in leading to the establishment, in 1950 in Geneva, of the European Centre for Culture and the inauguration, the same year in Bruges, of the College of Europe which offered advanced training in various human sciences from the perspective of European unity. However, the Economic Resolution of the Hague Congress had no immediate effect. This did not prevent a large number of issues already raised by the Economic and Social Committee — in areas such as agriculture, monetary union and the free movement of persons — from making substantial progress in future years, at times even becoming the catalyst for the development of the European integration process.