

Western European Union – Foreword

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Foreword

The research corpus on Western European Union (WEU), published by the CVCE in December 2009, focuses on the first European security and mutual defence organisation. Established in 1954, WEU is the heir to Western Union, which came into being in 1948 with the signing of the Brussels Treaty. Since 30 June 2011, WEU as such has ceased to exist.

Valuable contributions

This corpus offers the research community a wide range of documentary resources that cover the development of WEU, its organisation, its *modus operandi*, its activities and its enlargements over more than half a century. The corpus has been designed and produced by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) in partnership with the Institute for European Studies of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), with the expert assistance of Professor Éric Remacle.

André Dumoulin of the École Royale Militaire in Brussels and visiting lecturer at the University of Liège has made a substantial contribution by writing explanatory texts that introduce the various themes covered by the corpus and emphasise their historical and political context.

The precious help of these two WEU specialists has served to add further rigour to the academic approach characterising the preparation of this corpus, coordinated by Hervé Bribosia (Research Coordinator) and Cédric Sangaletti with the assistance of other researchers in European integration studies from the CVCE. An educational dimension was added to the corpus with the creation of various key documents, interactive maps and diagrams, and tables.

Varied resources

The main primary sources in the corpus come from the WEU archives held in the National Archives at Kew, in London. These documents, for the most part previously unpublished, enable us to relive the first steps made by the organisation originating in the Brussels Treaty.

The corpus also includes institutional documents from the WEU Assembly, whose seat is in Paris. These particularly give an account of the work done since its earliest days by this institution, which gradually widened its activities and subject matter to cover the many aspects of European defence.

Several documents come from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Education of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, founder member of WEU. These documents cover the non-military side of the Brussels Treaty Organisation: its economic, social and cultural activities.

Material from the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence and the documents and information obtained from the WEU Secretariat-General in Brussels also enhance the research corpus on various specific points.

The rationale of the corpus stems from a desire to provide access to a wide variety of material,

in different languages, that also reflects a range of viewpoints: official documents, press articles, extracts from memoirs, scholarly articles, and illustrative and audiovisual material.

Exclusive interviews

In the compilation of this research corpus, the CVCE has been able to set up exclusive filmed interviews with eminent figures from WEU, thus providing the corpus with a series of new primary sources. The accounts given by Colin Cameron, Secretary-General of the Assembly, Charles Goerens, former President of the Assembly, and Willem van Eekelen, former Secretary-General of WEU, bring to life the history of this pioneering organisation whilst offering an insight into the future of European policy on security and defence.

Events surrounding the publication of the research corpus

To mark the online publication of the corpus, the CVCE was invited to Paris by the WEU Assembly to show the results of its work to the members of this parliamentary institution as it held its plenary session on 1, 2 and 3 December 2009.

On 23 February 2010, the CVCE was delighted to welcome Arnaud Jacomet, WEU Secretary-General, Colin Cameron and Charles Goerens, along with representatives of the WEU Assembly and members of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies, to a presentation of the results of the research project. The discussion that followed provided an opportunity to raise a number of subjects of interest regarding European defence. The participants spoke about the role of WEU and the Assembly and the valuable legacy passed on to the European Union.

On 17 March 2010, Cédric Sangaletti was also able to present the research corpus to students taking the European Security and Defence Policy course run by André Dumoulin at the University of Liège. Arnaud Jacomet attended the lecture and shared his experience at WEU with the students.

Follow-up to the WEU research project

The contracting parties to WEU decided to close the organisation on 30 June 2011. They appointed the National Archives of Luxembourg as custodian of the WEU archives and provided for the CVCE to explore these archives for research purposes. In the short term, the WEU research corpus will be revised and enhanced, and a subject file on the history and modus operandi of WEU, geared more specifically at the teaching and lifelong learning communities, will also be created.