The Congress of the European Parliamentary Union in Gstaad (8 to 10 September 1947)

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The desire to turn federalist ideas into reality inspired some members of parliament to create pro-European groups within national parliaments. For example, in February 1947, British MPs formed the Federalist Group of the House of Commons. Three months later, Winston Churchill became leader of the United Europe Movement, which assembled senior British politicians and businessmen who advocated a fairly flexible European confederation modelled on the British Commonwealth. Then, on 19 June 1947, on the initiative of the Union of European Federalists (UEF), French MPs formed the French Federalist Parliamentary Group. Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands soon followed suit.

In July 1947, at a conference held in Gstaad, Switzerland, these pro-European parliamentary groups met for the first time under the name of the European Parliamentary Union (EPU). This event was the result of an initiative undertaken by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, the charismatic founder and organiser of the Paneuropean Union in the interwar years. In October 1946, he had sent a questionnaire to more than 4 000 Western European members of parliament about the establishment of a European federation within the framework of the United Nations. He received many positive replies, and that quickly led him to consider setting up a cross-party parliamentary committee in each House, responsible for appointing a European Congress that might act as a precursor to a true Council of Europe, for which Coudenhove had been calling for nearly 30 years.

Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi organised the first EPU Congress from 8 to 10 September 1947, once again in Gstaad. One hundred and fourteen members of parliament and senators from ten European countries debated the most effective ways of promoting European federalism. They decided to act through federal parliamentary groups and to draw up a draft European constitution that was either federal or confederal in nature and would provide for an executive, a legislature and a judiciary, as well as a common European currency.

- **Declaration of European solidarity (Gstaad, 9 September 1947)**

- **Cover page of Coudenhove-Kalergi's report on the plan for a European Assembly (September 1947)**