

The Congress of Europe in The Hague (7 to 10 May 1948)

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The Congress of Europe in The Hague (7 to 10 May 1948)

Between 7 and 10 May 1948, a great international Congress of Europe took place in The Hague, under the honorary chairmanship of Winston Churchill. The International Committee of the Movements for European Unity had invited nearly 800 eminent figures from most Western European countries, including politicians (members of parliament and ministers), leaders of employers' organisations and trade unions, journalists, and intellectuals. Seventeen countries were represented, and observers from Eastern Europe and the USA also attended. The largest delegations came from France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany. This was an ambitious Congress which set itself three objectives: to demonstrate the existence, in all free countries of Europe, of a body of public opinion in support of European unity; to discuss the challenges posed by European unity and propose practical solutions to governments; and to give new impetus to the international publicity campaign.

Most of the plenary sessions of this 'States-General' of Europe were chaired by Anthony Eden and Paul van Zeeland. The work of the Congress was divided among three committees: an Economic and Social Committee, a Political Committee and a Cultural Committee. Throughout the debates, two different ideological trends were evident: the French, Belgians, Italians, Dutch and most of the trade unionists took the federalist line, whereas the British and the Scandinavians declared themselves unionists, in favour of European rapprochement administered by governments and parliaments.

The Economic and Social Committee called for the progressive abolition of quantitative barriers to trade, for currency convertibility, resource planning, labour mobility, coordination of economic policies and the promotion of full employment. The Political Committee spent much time discussing the creation of a European Assembly elected by universal suffrage. It called on the European states to pool some of their sovereign rights and their resources and made the case for a united Europe open to Germany. The Cultural Committee called for the adoption of a Charter of Fundamental Rights, a Supreme Court, and the creation of a European centre for children, youth and culture. Several aspirations voiced at the Hague Congress became reality in the following months: the European Centre for Culture, the College of Europe, the Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights.

- [The Hague Congress \(7–10 May 1948\)](#)