

The plan for an EDC

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The plan for an EDC

In the summer of 1950, Jean Monnet, General Commissioner of the French National Planning Board and the man behind the Schuman Plan, sought to organise European defence on a supranational basis comparable to that laid down in the Schuman proposal. At the same time, the USA asked their allies to plan for the rearmament of West Germany. But Monnet was also trying to ensure that Germany, aware that its role was becoming increasingly indispensable, did not lose sight of the plan for a coal and steel pool or harden its position in negotiations on this matter. He put his proposal to René Plevin, French Premier and former Defence Minister, who in turn submitted it to the Council of Ministers before putting it to the French National Assembly on 24 October 1950.

Keen that the establishment of a German army should be undertaken within the confines of a European structure, the French Premier, René Plevin, put forward to his European partners a plan proposing the constitution of a European army of 100 000 men. The Plevin Plan was to combine battalions from various European countries, including Germany. The European army, though run by a European Minister for Defence and endowed with a common budget, would be placed under the supreme command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Negotiations began on 15 February 1951. With American support, the members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) signed the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community (EDC) on 27 May 1952 in Paris. It differed from the initial French plan in several respects. The planned European army would consist of 40 national divisions of 13 000 soldiers wearing a common uniform, much more than originally proposed by France. The Treaty also provided for the creation of a Commissariat of nine members, having less extensive powers than those of the High Authority of the ECSC, a Council of Ministers, and an EDC Assembly with the task of drafting a plan for a European political authority. As those in federalist circles had wished, Article 38 of the Treaty provided for the development of a plan for a federal structure to oversee and democratically control the planned European army. The EDC Treaty, signed for a period of 50 years, could not, however, come into force until it had been ratified by the parliaments of all the signatory states.