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EU
PIONEERS

The trailblazers who helped
build today's Europe

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From resistance fighters and Holocaust survivors to politicians and even a movie star, the visionary leaders described in this booklet inspired the creation of the Europe we live in today. The EU pioneers are a diverse group of people, but they shared the same ideal: a peaceful, united and prosperous Europe.

Many of them worked to bring about the end of conflict in Europe after the horrors of two world wars and to promote peace and solidarity between people. They were champions of the fundamental values upon which the European Union is founded: freedom, democracy and equality; respect for human dignity, human rights and the rule of law; and solidarity and protection for everyone in society.

The aim of this booklet is to chronicle the impact of their contributions to the foundations of the EU. They worked for peace and prosperity, and to eradicate social exclusion and discrimination. They helped develop the systems that led to economic stability and eventually a single currency, and they championed Europe's rich cultural history.

Without their drive and imagination, we would not be living in the sphere of peace and stability that is modern-day Europe.

These short biographies are just a taster of the full articles available online here: https://europa.eu/european-union/principles-countries-history/history-eu/eu-pioneers_en

Robert Schuman
p. 14

Contents

Melina Mercouri
p. 34

Paul-Henri Spaak
p. 32

Simone Veil
p. 16

Anna Lindh
p. 46

Alcide De Gasperi
p. 12

Jean Monnet
1888-1979

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Jean Monnet was turned down for military service in France on health grounds. To serve his country another way and benefit France's war effort, Monnet offered his services to the government to better coordinate the transportation of war supplies. This proposal was accepted and the French President made him an economic intermediary.

Having shown great aptitude during the war, at the age of 31 he was named Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations when it was created in 1919. When his father died in 1923 Monnet returned to his home town of Cognac and successfully turned around the fortunes of the declining family business.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Monnet became president of a Franco-British committee set up to coordinate the two countries' production capacities. The British government sent him to the United States to oversee the purchase of war supplies. Making a good impression on US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Monnet soon became one of his trusted advisers, and urged him to expand the production capacity for military equipment in the United States even before the country entered the war.

Jean Monnet's house in France is now a museum and a workspace for visiting school groups.

In 1943, Monnet became a member of the French Committee of National Liberation, the de facto French government-in-exile in Algiers. It was at this time that he became explicit about his vision for a united Europe to secure peace. During a meeting of this committee on 5 August 1943, Monnet declared: 'There will be no peace in Europe, if the states are reconstituted on the basis of national sovereignty … The countries of Europe are too small to guarantee their peoples the necessary prosperity and social development. The European states must constitute themselves into a federation …'

With growing international tensions after the war, Monnet felt that it was time to pursue European unity, and he and his team began work on the concept of a European community. On 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman, France's Minister for Foreign Affairs, delivered the Schuman Declaration on behalf of the French government.

This declaration was instigated and prepared by Monnet, and proposed to place all German–French production of coal and steel under a single high authority. The idea was that if the production of these resources were shared by the two most powerful countries in Europe this would prevent another war. As the governments of Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands responded favourably, this declaration laid the basis for the European Coal and Steel Community, the predecessor to the European Economic Community and the subsequent European Union.

Konrad Adenauer
1876-1967
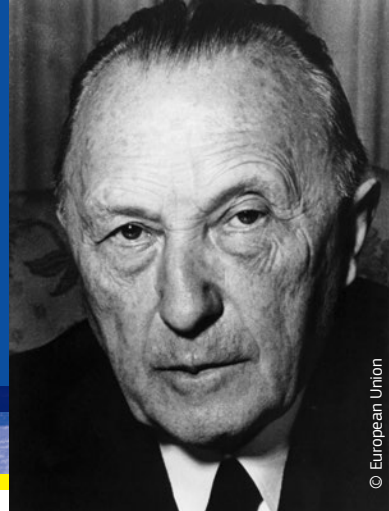
Voted 'the greatest German of all time' by his fellow Germans in a 2003 poll, Konrad Adenauer pushed tirelessly for European unity and a lasting peace between nations. Europe as we know it today would not have been possible without the confidence that he inspired in other European countries to follow his and Germany's lead.

Adenauer's views were formed through his experiences of war. He was in his 30s and Cologne's deputy mayor when the First World War broke out. Despite the hardships, he managed to keep the city operating both for its civilians and for the military that used it as a main supply and transportation base for German troops.

He became mayor of Cologne in 1917, but was dismissed from office in 1933 after clashing with the Nazi party because he refused to decorate the city with swastikas for Hitler's visit. Warned that he was in danger, Adenauer went on the run and took refuge in a monastery until it was safe for him to leave. Even then, although the regime considered him less of a threat, the Nazis came after him from time to time. He spent time in prison and was put on lists for deportation, but somehow he survived the war.

Konrad Adenauer signs the Treaties of Rome, which created the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, in the city hall of Rome on 25 March 1957.

With the Nazis defeated, Adenauer set about pursuing his goals of reconciling Germany with its former enemies, especially France, and creating an enduring peace in Europe. He was elected Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) on 15 September 1949. In the years that followed, he led his country into the Council of Europe (1951) and ensured that West Germany was instrumental in founding the European Coal and Steel Community (1952). This organisation was created to prevent further conflict by controlling the industries that had been at the heart of Europe's war machines. In 1955, Adenauer also took West Germany into NATO, perhaps the greatest sign yet that the country was returning to the international fold.

Adenauer's belief that a strong relationship between West Germany and France could prove the basis for lasting peace and stability in Europe led in 1963 to the signing of the Élysée Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Friendship. This set the seal on the reconciliation between the two countries and established a firm foundation for relations that ended centuries of rivalry. Adenauer's vision for the role of his country in a united Europe ensured that Germany became the free and democratic society we know today.

Louise Weiss
1893-1983

The journalist and politician Louise Weiss was an influential voice in French and international affairs from the 1920s until her death in 1983. Her experiences working in field hospitals during the First World War profoundly affected her. She dedicated her life to pursuing peace, first through her work on several newspapers and then in her commitment to the cause of female suffrage. During the Second World War, she helped save thousands of Jewish children from the Nazis and joined the French Resistance.

After the war, Weiss travelled extensively around the globe, and wrote many articles for prominent French magazines and newspapers on the leading role that the West, and especially Europe, could play in promoting democratic values worldwide. It was this belief that led to her to champion Europe as a counterpoint to the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In 1971, she established the Louise Weiss Foundation, which awards an annual prize to the person or institution that contributes most to advancing

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Louise Weiss is elected to the European Parliament in July 1979, becoming its oldest member at the age of 86.

'the science of peace'. Václav Havel, Helmut Schmidt and Simone Veil are among the winners of this award.

With her focus now on Europe, Weiss successfully ran for election to the European Parliament in 1979. In her inaugural speech to the Parliament she called on all Europeans to unite on the basis of common culture and not merely shared economic interests.

Louise Weiss was the Parliament's oldest member when she died in 1983 at the age of 90. The Parliament later named its main building in Strasbourg after her in recognition of her lifelong support of European values.

Alcide De Gasperi
1881-1954

Italian politician Alcide De Gasperi was both the last Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Italy, and the first Prime Minister of the Italian Republic. After the Second World War he oversaw the building of a new democracy in Italy, and the country's economic reconstruction and re-entry into the international political arena.

De Gasperi worked to help bring Germany and France together after almost a century of conflict. After the end of the war, he campaigned actively to unite Europe in the belief that this was the only way to prevent a recurrence of conflict. De Gasperi was motivated by a clear vision of a union of Europe that would not replace individual states, but instead allow them to work together.

'The future will not be built through force, nor the desire to conquer, but by the patient application of the democratic method, the constructive spirit of agreement, and by respect for freedom,' he said when he accepted the

© Intercontinentale / AFP

Alcide De Gasperi delivers a speech in Paris on 21 April 1954.

Charlemagne Prize for his work in service of a united Europe in 1952. This was essentially the message he had relayed to the leaders of Germany and France as he began his mediating efforts in support of Robert Schuman's call on 9 May 1950 for an integrated Europe.

De Gasperi's work contributed to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, an organisation that effectively removed the ability of European nations to wage war on each other. In 1954, his efforts were rewarded when he was named the first President of the Community's Parliamentary Assembly.

As well as his work to set up the Council of Europe, De Gasperi also achieved another of his goals – to restore Italy to a central role on the international stage, as his country joined the five other founding members of the Community. De Gasperi also had a wider vision – that of international cooperation as the basis for peace. He was the man behind Italy joining the US Marshall Plan and becoming part of NATO.

Robert Schuman
1886-1963

Excused from military service on medical grounds during the First World War, Robert Schuman saw action as a member of the French Resistance in the Second, and was eventually captured and imprisoned by the Nazis. Narrowly escaping deportation to the Dachau concentration camp, he fled to the 'free' zone of France where he went into hiding after the Nazis invaded the zone. In hiding, with a bounty on his head, he defied the Germans for the next 3 years.

Schuman had become active in politics between the wars, starting his career in public service as a member of the French parliament for the Moselle region. Born a German citizen in Luxembourg, Schuman became French when, in 1919, the region of Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France.

After the war, he returned to national politics in a series of top-level posts, including Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. He became a key negotiator of major treaties and initiatives such as those for the Council of Europe, the Marshall Plan and NATO, all aimed at increasing cooperation within the western alliance and uniting Europe.

Robert Schuman, in the middle, in conversation with Ludwig Erhard, on the left.

He is best known for the Schuman Declaration, in which he proposed a merger of economic interests. He was convinced that when European nations were tied together in such a way, it would render war 'not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible'.

In cooperation with Jean Monnet he drew up the Schuman Plan, which he published on 9 May 1950, the date now regarded as the birth of the European Union and celebrated each year as Europe Day. In the accompanying speech, he proposed joint control of coal and steel production, the most important materials for the armaments industry.

Less than a year later, on 18 April 1951, the six founding members (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) signed the Treaty of Paris. It created the European Coal and Steel Community, Europe's first supranational community. This ground-breaking organisation paved the way for the European Economic Community, and subsequently the European Union.

Simone Veil
1927-2017

A survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, Simone Veil's childhood and traumatic experiences during the Second World War sowed the seeds of a commitment to a unified Europe, a cause she would champion for the rest of her life.

Veil's political ascent started from an early career in law. In 1974, she joined the French government under President Giscard d'Estaing as Minister for Health. Soon after her appointment she fought to legalise abortion in France, and only succeeded when the opposition in the national assembly joined her cause to push through the law in 1975. It was seen as a significant achievement, and the law became widely known as *'la loi Veil'*.

As her political career in France progressed, she became more committed to the idea of a Europe free of conflict and oppression. President Giscard d'Estaing asked Veil to head his party list in the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979.

Veil was elected to the Parliament, which chose her as its President, thus becoming the first woman to head any EU institution. Two years later she won the Charlemagne Prize, an award honouring a person's contributions to European unity.

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Simone Veil, the newly-elected President of the European Parliament, receives a standing ovation after delivering a speech, June 1979.

After 14 years in the European Parliament, Veil returned to French politics in 1993, serving as Minister of State and Minister for Health and Social Affairs until 1995. In 1998, she was appointed to France's Constitutional Council.

When Veil was elected to the Académie Française in 2008, one of only a handful of women to receive such an honour, she had three things engraved on the ceremonial sword that is crafted for each member of the academy. These were her Auschwitz tattoo number, 78651; the motto of the French Republic, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'; and the European Union motto, 'United in Diversity'.

She died in 2017, and in 2018 her remains were interred in the Panthéon mausoleum in Paris. She was only the fifth woman to receive this honour.

Joseph Bech
1887-1975
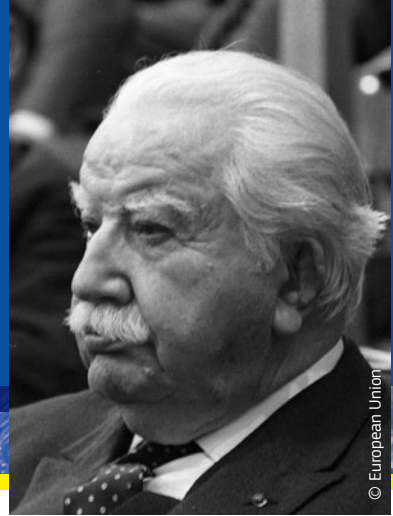
In 1950, when French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed forming an organisation that would essentially prevent European countries from waging war again on each other, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Joseph Bech, jumped enthusiastically on board.

Bech was a firm believer in achieving a stable and prosperous Europe through closer economic cooperation.

As well as preventing another devastating conflict like the Second World War, Bech – who had fled Nazi-occupied Luxembourg to serve in his country's government-in-exile in London – saw the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community as an opportunity for his small country to make its mark in a new Europe. He had already been instrumental in creating the Benelux Customs Union between the exiled governments of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1944. In the 1950s he became one of the leading architects of European integration.

French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, Luxembourgish Minister for Foreign Affairs Joseph Bech, and Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak at the first session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 10 August 1949.

In June 1955, Bech chaired the Messina Conference that later led to the Treaty of Rome that created the European Economic Community, the forerunner of today's European Union. The focus of this conference was a memorandum from the three Benelux countries, including Bech as Luxembourg's representative. This document combined French and Dutch plans for new activities in the fields of transport and energy, especially nuclear energy, and a general common market, with a focus on the need for a common authority with real powers.

In 1959, Bech stepped down as Foreign Minister, and in 1964 he retired from the political scene.

Marga Klompé
1912-1986

Marga Klompé was a scientist and teacher who was active in the Dutch Resistance during the Second World War. She became a member of the Dutch parliament in 1948, and was one of the negotiators of the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Klompé became the first female member of the European Coal and Steel Community's Common Assembly, the forerunner of today's European Parliament, which held its first session in 1952.

In 1955, Klompé was appointed to a working party set up by the Assembly that focused on improving the implementation and extending the powers of the European Coal and Steel Community and on creating a single market that extended beyond the coal and steel sector. In 1956, she left the Assembly to become the Netherlands' first female government minister in a centre-left coalition led by Prime Minister Willem Drees.

Marga Klompé with Deputy Prime Minister Jan de Quay (left) and the Director of the Social Service, Jan Verhoeven (right) during a debate in the House of Representatives, 16 January 1967.

As Minister for Social Work, one of her greatest achievements was the General Assistance Act, which replaced the earlier poor law. The legislation, which came into force in 1965, made social protection a right for everyone.

She was Minister for Culture, Recreation and Social Work between 1966 and 1971 in the cabinet of Prime Minister Piet de Jong. In 1971, Klompé was given the title of Minister of State, an honour granted in the Netherlands to senior politicians of great merit at the end of their career.

After leaving politics, Klompé continued to campaign for international justice and social responsibility, including criticism of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Klompé had a strong Catholic faith. Pope Paul VI appointed her as chair of the Dutch National Commission for Justice and Peace, and she was one of the founders of the Union of Catholic Female Graduates and of the Catholic Women's Volunteer Service.

Winston Churchill
1874-1965

© AFP

When you think about Winston Churchill, the first image that might come to mind is an imposing figure giving a victory sign while puffing on a cigar. This popular representation is but one aspect of the former army officer, war reporter and British Prime Minister who rallied a nation under bombardment.

What is often overlooked is that Winston Churchill was committed to the idea of European integration and was one of the first to call for the creation of a 'United States of Europe'. He was one of the many leaders whose experiences of war convinced him that only a united Europe could guarantee peace.

His rallying call of 4 June 1940, 'We shall fight on the beaches', is one of his most famous declarations. Another speech, however, that is sometimes overlooked is the address that Churchill gave at the University of Zurich in

President of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe Paul-Henri Spaak, French politician Paul Reynaud, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman at the meeting of the Consultative Assembly in Strasbourg on August 11, 1950.

1946. In it, he urged Europeans to turn their backs on the horrors of the past and look to the future. He declared that the first step to recreate the 'European family' of justice, mercy and freedom was to 'build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living.'

With this plea, Churchill was one of the first to advocate European integration to prevent the atrocities of two world wars from ever happening again, calling for the creation of a Council of Europe as a first step.

In 1948, in The Hague, 800 delegates from all European countries met, with Churchill as honorary president, at a grand Congress of Europe. This led to the creation of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949, the first meeting of which was attended by Churchill himself.

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Helmut Kohl
1930-2017
and

François Mitterrand
1916-1996

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Two of Europe's most recognisable political leaders of the 20th century were perhaps also two of the most unlikely to work so closely together. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President François Mitterrand were born and grew up in an era when their nations fought two cataclysmic wars.

Kohl and Mitterrand worked hard to bolster the post-war relationship between France and Germany, and underscored the importance of peace between their nations in the pursuit of European integration. The sight of the two leaders holding hands at a ceremony on 22 September 1984 to mark the 70th anniversary of the start of the First World War is an iconic and moving image that made international headlines.

Helmut Kohl addresses MEPs in the European Parliament in Strasbourg
after the fall of the Berlin Wall, 22 November 1989.

Helmut Kohl

Born in Ludwigshafen, Germany, in 1930, Helmut Kohl began his working life in academia, later moving into business and eventually politics. In 1959, he was elected leader of his hometown's branch of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and rose quickly through the ranks of local and regional politics. After serving as Minister-President of Rhineland Palatinate (making him the youngest elected head of government in Germany), and as chairman of the CDU, he took the first steps toward the Chancellorship of West Germany.

In 1982, the ruling government fell after a vote of no confidence instigated by the CDU. Kohl was consequently elected Chancellor by the Bundestag, and a year later consolidated his hold on power by overwhelmingly winning the 1983 federal elections.

Kohl is perhaps best remembered for his commitment to a single German state. He was the first Chancellor to receive the head of state of East Germany in a diplomatic capacity, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall he was steadfast in pursuing a reunification of the two German states. A treaty was quickly signed and ratified by both parliaments in 1990, reunifying Germany after 45 years and bringing Kohl's vision of a united Europe closer to reality.

François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl at the ceremony commemorating the deaths of French and German soldiers during the two World Wars at the Douaumont cemetery in Verdun, France, on 22 September 1984.

François Mitterrand

François Mitterrand, born in Charente, France, in 1916, established his political roots as a supporter of the French nationalist right. He was drafted to the front lines upon the outbreak of the Second World War, and was captured in 1940 and held as a German prisoner of war. After his escape, he worked for a time under France's Vichy regime before pivoting to the left and committing to the French Resistance. He built up a network with other prisoners of war and French armed resistance groups before escaping to London.

After the war, Mitterrand cemented his position on the left by opposing Charles de Gaulle, eventually becoming leader of France's Socialist Party. He was elected President in 1981, leading the country's first left-wing government in 23 years.

While president, Mitterrand supported EU enlargement by encouraging the accession of Spain and Portugal. He also believed in a more integrated EU and championed the passing of the Single European Act in 1986, which laid the first legal foundations for a European single market.
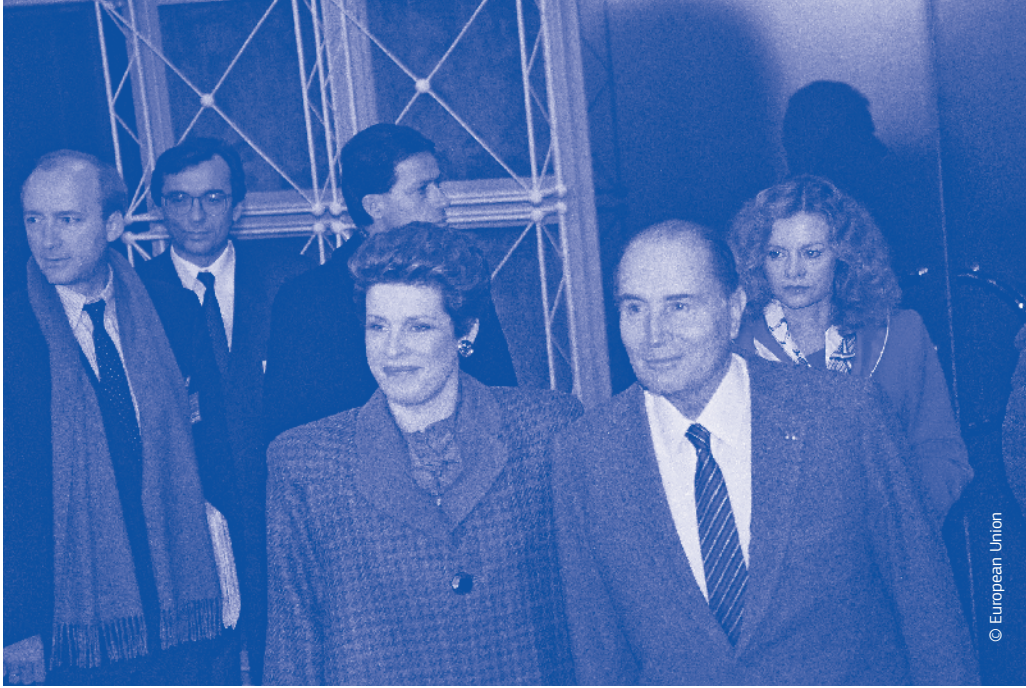
Arrival of François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, at a European Council meeting, Strasbourg, France, 12 December 1989.

The famous photograph of Kohl and Mitterrand at a remembrance ceremony at Verdun, the site of one of the longest battles of the First World War, showed how far Germany, France and Europe had come since the end of the Second World War.

In recognition of their immense contribution to Franco-German relations, they received the Charlemagne Prize in 1988, which is awarded for work towards European unification.

Kohl was Chancellor for 16 years, the longest tenure of any German leader in the 20th century. Similarly, Mitterrand served as President of the French Republic for 14 years, the longest presidency in France's history. Kohl and Mitterrand passed away in 2017 and 1996 respectively, after decades of service to their own countries and to Europe.

Johan Willem Beyen
1897-1976
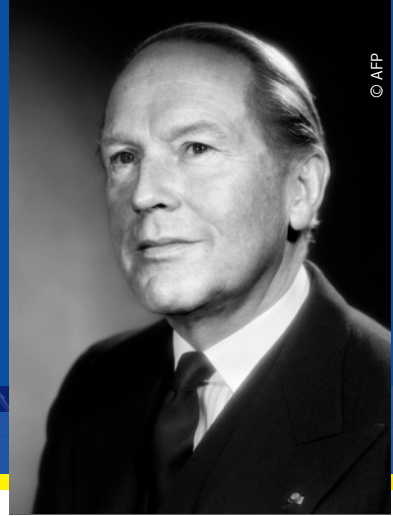
Dutch politician Johan Willem Beyen convinced his fellow European leaders to buy into his plan for full economic cooperation. In the mid 1950s, when Beyen was developing his proposal for a customs union, he understood the difficulty in convincing reluctant forces in his native Netherlands, and in the rest of Europe, to accept more European integration.

The Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 and the subsequent creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952 had been two milestones on the road to Europe's post-war recovery, but many leaders in the Community were wary of further integration, especially in terms of the economy. But Beyen believed that the time was right to push for even greater cooperation between European nations.

His plan revolved around the concept that full integration was necessary, not just in the field of coal and steel. The solution was therefore a common market for everything, along the lines of the Benelux agreement signed between Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1944.

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Johan Willem Beyen (far left), with Italy's Gaetano Martino, Joseph Bech of Luxembourg, France's Antoine Pinay, Germany's Walter Hallstein and the Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak at the meeting of the six Member States of the European Coal and Steel Community at the Messina Conference, 1 to 3 June 1955.

Presenting the Beyen Plan at the Messina Conference in 1955, Beyen sold the idea that the political unity that most (if not all) the attendees hoped for was not achievable without a common market with some shared responsibility for economic and social policy. In the end, as a result of the Beyen Plan being accepted, six countries signed the Treaties of Rome in March 1957, and created the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community.

One might wonder how European integration would have progressed had it not been for the role played by Willem Beyen. His delivery of the plan, which gave fresh impetus to the European project when it was most needed, helped create the European Union we know today.

Ursula Hirschmann
1913-1991

Born into a middle-class Jewish family in Berlin, in 1932 Ursula Hirschmann joined the youth organisation of the Social Democratic Party in resistance to the advance of the Nazis. After meeting and then marrying Eugenio Colorni, a young Italian philosopher and socialist, Hirschmann became active in the clandestine anti-fascist opposition in his native Italy.

When Colorni was arrested and imprisoned on the island of Ventotene, she followed her husband there. There they met Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli, who in 1941 co-authored the Ventotene Manifesto 'for a free and united Europe', widely regarded as the starting point for European federalism.

The manifesto was a blueprint for a democratic European union that could be created after the war. It called for a break with Europe's past to form a new political system through a restructuring of politics and extensive social reform. Hirschmann smuggled the manifesto to mainland Italy and helped to disseminate it. It was widely read by those fighting with the Italian Resistance against the Nazis.

After leaving Ventotene, Hirschmann arrived in Milan and, with Spinelli and other activists, founded the Movimento Federalista Europeo (European Federalist Movement) in 1943. The first meeting for the constitution of the movement was held in Milan in August of that year, leading to the approval of the six cornerstones of federalist thought that were conceived in Ventotene.

Eugenio Colorni was murdered by fascists in Rome in 1944. Hirschmann married Altiero Spinelli the following year. They fled to Switzerland, where they worked together to internationalise the European Federalist Movement, which led to Hirschmann's involvement in organising the first international federalist congress in Paris in 1945.

Hirschmann's political commitment did not end after the Second World War. In 1975, she founded the Femmes pour l'Europe (Women for Europe) association in Brussels.
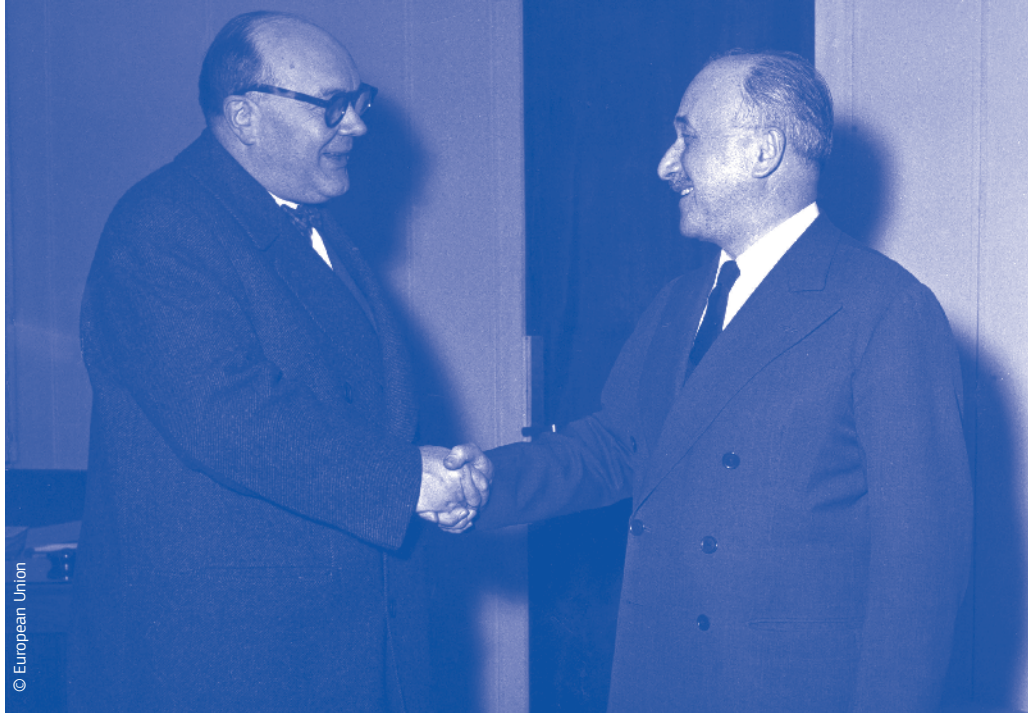
Paul-Henri Spaak
1899-1972
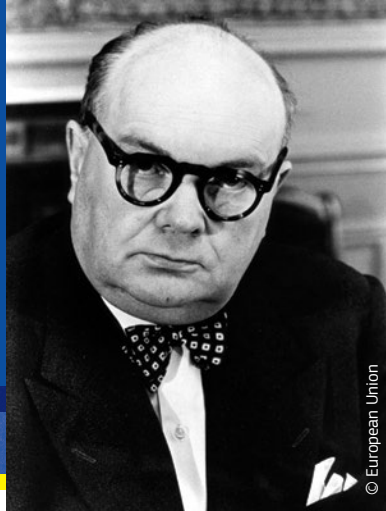
Held as a prisoner by the Germans during the First World War, and serving as Belgian Foreign Minister in exile during the Second, Paul-Henri Spaak was another of the great EU pioneers to witness the horrors of Europe's bloodiest century.

After the devastation of the Second World War, Spaak saw an opportunity to rebuild Europe through economic and political cooperation. While in exile in London during the war, he had formulated plans with colleagues from the Netherlands and Luxembourg for a highly ambitious project: a customs union between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

In 1944, the plan came to fruition, and the Benelux Customs Union was born. The free movement of money, people, services and goods would be guaranteed between the three countries. This would serve as an inspiration for further European integration.

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Paul-Henri Spaak shakes hands with Jean Monnet.

For Spaak, uniting countries through binding treaty obligations was the most effective means of guaranteeing peace and stability. He helped achieve these aims as president of the first full meeting of the United Nations in 1946 and as Secretary General of NATO (1957–1961).

During the Messina Conference of European leaders in 1955, the three Benelux countries tabled a proposal to create a common market and integrate the transport and atomic energy sectors. This Spaak Report was the basis of the Intergovernmental Conference on the Common Market and Euratom in 1956, and led to the Treaties of Rome, signed on 25 March 1957, establishing the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community in 1958. Spaak signed the treaty for Belgium.

Melina Mercouri
1920-1994

The Greek actor and politician Melina Mercouri brought fire and passion to everything she did, from gracing stage and screen in the early part of her life, to fighting the fascist junta that took control of Greece in 1967 and campaigning for the protection and promotion of culture during her political career.

Mercouri was a leading theatre actor in Greece before becoming an international film star. She became politicised in 1967 when a group of right-wing army officers seized power in Greece. Mercouri soon became one of the most prominent leaders of the expatriate movement to overthrow the junta, and had her Greek citizenship revoked by Brigadier General Stylianos Pattakos as a result. Her famous riposte to this was 'I was born a Greek and I will die a Greek. Pattakos was born a fascist and he'll die a fascist.'

She travelled extensively to campaign against the dictatorship, spreading awareness about the situation in Greece and calling for the isolation and removal of the colonels. This outspoken opposition led to an assassination attempt in Italy, but Mercouri remained undeterred and continued campaigning against the junta until it fell in 1974.

Melina Mercouri talks to the press ahead of the launch of the first
European Capital of Culture in Athens, 1985.

After democracy was restored Mercouri returned to Greece, where she
helped to form the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and became
actively involved in the country's women's movement. She was elected to
the Greek parliament in 1977. When her party won the 1981 elections,
Mercouri was appointed Minister for Culture, a post she held for 8 years,
during which time she brought the culture portfolio to the forefront of
Greek politics.

One of her greatest achievements was establishing the European Capitals
of Culture, with Athens chosen as the first capital in 1985. This followed
a meeting she organised with the culture ministers of the 10 EU Member
States during the first Greek presidency of the Council in 1983.

During the second Greek Presidency of the Council in 1988, Mercouri
began campaigning for dialogue and cooperation with the countries of
Eastern Europe at a time of great upheaval. As the Cold War ended and the
Iron Curtain was brought down, Mercouri was a leading instigator of the
European Cultural Month initiative, which focused on Central and Eastern
European countries in particular.

Walter Hallstein
1901-1982
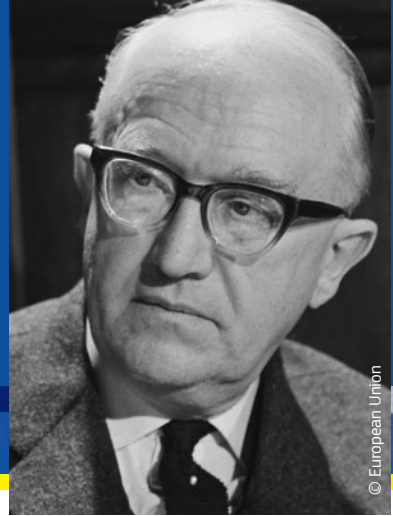
Walter Hallstein used his time as the first President of the European Commission (1958–1967) to build the common market and push for rapid European integration.

Hallstein's commitment to European unity, experience and specialised knowledge had inspired Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to appoint him as the head of West Germany's delegation to the Schuman Conference that led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950.

As Secretary of State in the German Foreign Ministry, Hallstein attained international recognition through the Hallstein Doctrine of the 1950s, which shaped West Germany's foreign policy for years to come. But it was his work on European economic integration that would secure his legacy as an EU pioneer.

Walter Hallstein (far right) raises a glass with Robert Schuman (far left), and others.

Hallstein was a staunch proponent of European unity through the formation of a shared economic community. The first steps towards this economic integration were taken during the Messina Conference in 1955.

Although Hallstein initially wanted this integration to be all encompassing and achieved as quickly as possible, the political realities of the time helped him to recognise that a gradual fusing together of the markets of the Member States would be of maximum benefit to all. In 1958, Hallstein was chosen as the first President of the Commission of the European Economic Community. He took office with one aim: the vision of a united Europe as laid down in the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950.

Altiero Spinelli
1907-1986
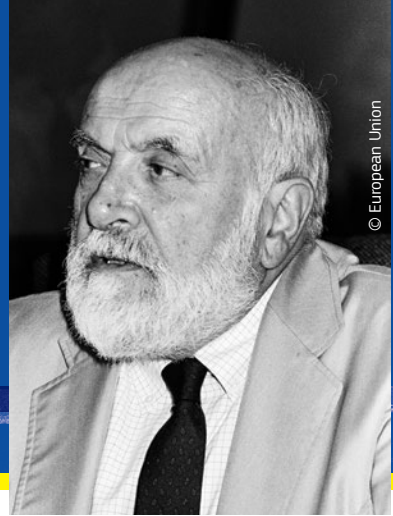
Altiero Spinelli was one of the authors of the Ventotene Manifesto, one of the first documents to espouse the creation of a united Europe and a European constitution. He, along with other political prisoners, secretly wrote the manifesto on cigarette papers while incarcerated by the Italian fascist regime on the island of Ventotene between 1927 and 1943. Spinelli's activities in the Italian Communist Party had led to his imprisonment by Benito Mussolini's fascist Special Tribunal.

After the Second World War, Spinelli founded the Movimento Federalista Europeo (European Federalist Movement) in Italy, and throughout the rest of the 1940s and 1950s he was a staunch advocate of the federalist cause of a united Europe. In the 1960s, Spinelli established the Institute of International Affairs in Rome, and was a member of the European Commission from 1970 until 1976. In 1979, he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament.

Inaugural session of the Conference on Industry and Society in the Community, Venice, 20 April 1972 (from left to right): Marcel Mart, Luxembourgish Minister for the Economy; Altiero Spinelli; Vittorio Cini, Count of Monselice; and Yves Le Portz, President of the European Investment Bank.

In 1980, together with other federalist-minded MEPs, he founded the Crocodile Club, named after the restaurant in Strasbourg that they frequented. The Crocodile Club wanted a new European treaty. The members tabled a motion for the Parliament to set up a special committee to draft a proposal for a new treaty, which would be a European constitution in all but name.

On 14 February 1984, the European Parliament adopted his proposal with an overwhelming majority and approved the Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union, also known as the Spinelli Plan.

Although national parliaments failed to endorse it, the document did provide a basis for the Single European Act of 1986, which set out the aim of creating the single market, and for the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which created the European Union.

Nilde Iotti
1920-1999

A resistance fighter during the Second World War, Leonilde 'Nilde' Iotti became a prominent figure in the Italian Communist Party, and a leading organiser of the Union of Italian Women once the conflict was over. With women gaining full suffrage in 1945, Iotti enjoyed considerable support among female voters and was elected in 1946 to the Constituent Assembly, a parliamentary chamber tasked with drafting a new republican constitution. Iotti was responsible for preparing the family-policy section of the constitution.

In 1948, she joined the Chamber of Deputies in the Italian parliament. She was the first woman, and the first communist, to hold high office in Italy when she became President of the Chamber in 1979, a post she held until 1992.

Iotti fought hard for women's rights throughout her political career. She supported and successfully campaigned for the introduction of divorce and abortion laws in her home country, which were high priorities for members of the women's movement. She was also a mediating voice, urging her younger comrades in the Communist Party not to ignore the views of Catholic women on such topics.

Nilde Iotti during the European Parliament presidential election in 1979.

A politician committed to the idea of a fair and equal Europe, Iotti brought her fight for universal suffrage to the European stage. She became a Member of the European Parliament in 1969, and her priority throughout her time as an MEP was to champion open elections to the Parliament in which European citizens would directly elect their representatives. Iotti believed that election by the people would give the Parliament an unshakeable mandate to act on behalf of citizens.

Iotti saw her and her colleagues' work rewarded in 1979, when the first direct elections to the European Parliament were held. She ended her 10-year association with the Parliament soon after, a decade in which she also served on the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Iotti's connection to Europe did not end there. In 1997, she was elected Vice-President of the Council of Europe, the human-rights organisation that includes 47 Member States.

Nicole Fontaine
1942-2018

From the very start of her parliamentary career in her native France, Nicole Fontaine worked for a citizens' Europe, focusing on projects concerning youth education and the mutual recognition of academic qualifications, as well as women's rights and gender equality.

The second female President of the European Parliament (1999–2002), Nicole Fontaine was a persuasive politician and devoted champion of Europe who set about reforming the Parliament's working methods to bring it closer to citizens.

In her maiden speech as President, to the European Council in Tampere, Finland, in October 1999, she underlined the importance of taking account of people's day-to-day concerns. She argued for an 'ambitious approach aimed at providing the Union with a charter of fundamental rights.' In December 2000, she signed the Charter of Fundamental Rights on behalf of the European Parliament.

Her diplomatic skills were widely recognised. In 1999, *The Economist* described her as 'a consensus-seeker, coalition-builder, conciliator … nowhere more at home than in the byzantine corridors of Europe, canvassing cross-party support, flashing her smile, teasing out compromise.'

Nicole Fontaine receives three Afghan women who left Kabul clandestinely, to protest against the treatment of women in their home country, 3 May 2001.

Working tirelessly for dialogue and peace, Fontaine famously brought together the Presidents of the Israeli and Palestinian parliaments for a historic handshake in Strasbourg in 2000. In April 2001, she invited Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Vice-President of Afghanistan, to visit Strasbourg to speak about the situation in his country. She was particularly concerned about the plight of Afghan women. The following month she invited three women who had secretly escaped Kabul to the European Parliament to give their testimony. She described the meeting as among the 'most moving moments' of her presidency.

Nicole Fontaine received a number of awards for her devotion to European ideals, including the Robert Schuman Medal and the Commandeur dans l'Ordre National du Mérite (Commander of the National Order of Merit).

Sicco Mansholt
1908-1995
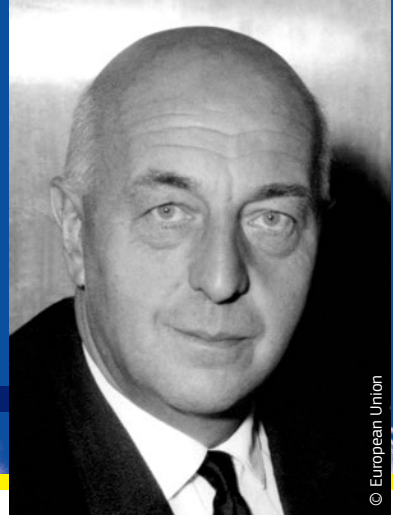
A member of the Dutch Resistance during the Second World War, Sicco Mansholt witnessed the horrors of the Dutch famine at the end of the conflict. A farmer before the war, Mansholt drew on his experiences in his new role as Minister for Agriculture in the Dutch post-war government.

With a dire shortage of food and a crisis looming, Mansholt took a number of measures to restore food supplies quickly, but at the same time he understood the need to modernise agriculture to avoid future shortages. He set minimum prices for the most important agricultural products, combined with import taxes and support for exports.

On a wider scale, Mansholt was convinced that Europe needed to become self-sufficient and that a stable supply of affordable food should be guaranteed for all.

In 1950, he developed a plan for a common market for agricultural produce in Europe with a supranational governing structure. This plan later served

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Sicco Mansholt attends a session at the European Parliament in Brussels, June 1987.

as the inspiration for the agricultural policy of the European Economic Community.

Mansholt put his plans for a common agricultural policy into practice when he became Commissioner for Agriculture in the very first European Commission in 1958. His plans initially faced some opposition from farmers and their political representatives, who believed that this common approach would threaten livelihoods and that only large farms would be able to survive.

There were many obstacles to overcome on the way to agreeing a common European policy, but Mansholt persevered and, in 1968, the Commission published the 'Memorandum on the reform of the common agricultural policy', otherwise named the Mansholt Plan. Essentially, the plan declared that for agriculture to flourish, farmers needed to modernise. This would guarantee productivity and enable European farmers to become self-sufficient.

Anna Lindh
1957-2003

Active in politics from a young age, Ylva Anna Maria Lindh was one of the most influential figures in modern Swedish politics. Born in 1957, Lindh studied law at Uppsala University before winning a seat in parliament in 1982. Her first cabinet post came 12 years later as Minister for the Environment.

Lindh was appointed Foreign Minister in 1998 in Prime Minister Göran Persson's cabinet. The media nicknamed her 'Persson's crown princess', as it was assumed that the Swedish leader was grooming her to be his successor as both head of the party and, eventually, the country.

Anna had a reputation as a straight-talker and could be an outspoken critic, especially when it came to human rights. In Moscow, she severely criticised Russian actions in Chechnya; she was a forthright supporter of the two-state solution in the Middle East and a fierce opponent of then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy towards the Palestinians. She opposed the war with Iraq on the grounds that the United Nations had

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Anna Lindh, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Göran Persson, Prime Minister of Sweden, in Athens at the signing ceremony of the Treaty of Accession of the Future Member States of the EU, 16 April 2003.

not sanctioned it, and castigated the United States over the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay.

Anna Lindh played a major role in developing Sweden's presence in the European Union as she chaired meetings of foreign ministers during the Swedish Presidency of the Council in 2001. When conflict was looming in 2001 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (now North Macedonia), Lindh, as Europe's chief envoy, was instrumental in bringing together the strands of the EU's usually disparate foreign policy in harmonised action that helped avoid war.

Lindh remained staunchly pro-European throughout her career. She was a leading campaign figure in Sweden's referendum in 2003 on adopting the euro. Tragically, she was attacked on 10 September 2003 in Stockholm by a knife-wielding assailant, 3 days before the referendum took place. She died the next day.

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The **European Consumer Centres Network**: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/consumer-rights-and-complaints/resolve-your-consumer-complaint/european-consumer-centres-network-ecc-net_en