

**EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION BETWEEN THE IDEA OF A UNITED EUROPE
AND THE IDEA OF A UNITARY EUROPE.
FROM THE IDEAS OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS TO THE CREATION OF
THE EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
COMMUNITY AND THE EUROPEAN ATOMIC ENERGY COMMUNITY.**

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ABSTRACT

Even if the history of the European construction has its origins in the Schuman Declaration which was uttered for the first time on May 9, 1950, more than 75 years ago, for us Romanians, the history of European construction is an intrinsic part of our recent history, Romania being a member of this unique project since January 1, 2007. Thus Romania has been part of this great pro-European family for 18 years. In this context of the year 2025 in which we celebrate 75 years since the first initiative to create a "United and Unitary Europe" and 18 years since Romania has been part of the European Union, it is appropriate to celebrate also this unique historical moment and to look back in history to highlight the most important moments of the process of European construction and to pay a tribute to its founders, those enlightened intellectuals with a brilliant thinking and vision without whom the realization of the European project would not have been possible and would not have been successful. Regardless of the field of activity, ideological and political preferences or the degree of intellectual training, the realities of the European Union are omnipresent in our daily lives and have a major importance in our destiny both at European, national and individual level, through the status of full citizens with full rights but also with obligations arising from the European treaties. In the recent past, the historiography production dedicated to the European construction has become a respectable one both in terms of quantity and quality, especially after the introduction of the history of the European construction in the field of academic disciplines in Romania. The present work aims to align itself with this trend and is addressed to students regardless of specialization, future European specialists as well as to all those who wish to know more deeply the process of European construction and the ideas that have been at the basis of it and to better understand the European Union today, this perpetuum mobile in constant change. Robert Schuman, for example, associated European construction with "a leap

into the unknown” because there had been no such phenomenon in the history of Europe, the project of European construction being the first of its kind.

KEYWORDS: *European construction, founding fathers, Franco-German rivalry, united Europe, unitary Europe, Pan Europe, Schuman Declaration, Council of Europe, Coal and Steel Economic Community, European Economic Community, European Atomic Energy Community.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: F15, N44, H87.

1. INTRODUCTION. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The changes brought by the World War I (1914-1918), had dramatic consequences on European peoples, the deep Franco-German rivalry, along with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the involvement of the United States in European affairs, led to the emergence of several discussions and works in the 1920s, which resulted in the creation of a “laboratory of ideas” (Roth, 2007), aimed at gradually achieving a united Europe.

In 1923, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi wrote a paper entitled “Pan Europa” in which he presented the “European idea,” based on the creation of a federation of European states to ensure unity and peace among nations. At that time, the attention of contemporaries did not seem to be attracted by such ideas. The only politician who responded promptly to this initiative was Aristide Briand, the French foreign minister, who, having lived through the devastating experience of the World War I and convinced of the negative effect of tense Franco-German relations, decided to launch the United States of Europe project in 1929 from the rostrum of the League of Nations in Geneva. Two years later, upon his death in 1931, the project to establish a European federation was no longer of interest to the politicians of the time, remaining only “an archive document.” In this context, Hitler seized power in 1933, resulting in World War II (1939-1945). Disagreements between the victorious and defeated states led to disagreements over the organization of the continent, resulting in even greater division.

The year 1945, from many points of view, can be called the year 0 of Europe (Păun, Păun, 1999). As a result of World War II, Europe lost 50 million people, of whom approximately 25 million were civilians. Added to these figures are millions of wounded, orphans, widows, collateral victims of war, and over 30 million Europeans seeking political asylum (Păun, Păun, 1999).

The political history of Europe began in 1945 with the rebirth of the continent through its reinvention. The reinvention of Europe was based on the European construction process. Thus, on September 19, 1946, Winston Churchill gave a speech on the future of Europe and it was headed in the auditorium of the University of Zurich. He is credited with reviving the idea of a united Europe, which originated in the 1920s on the initiative of Count Coudenhove Kalergi and Aristide Briand (Brestein, Milza, 1988).

Among the first steps taken towards European construction, a unique and unprecedented project was the creation of the Council of Europe. The Treaty establishing the Council of Europe was signed on May 5, 1949. The ten signatory countries were: France, Great Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, and Sweden. With the establishment of the Council of Europe, debates on the creation of a united Europe were relaunched. Although the Council had no legislative, let alone executive, functions, it served as a platform and forum, or as a new laboratory of ideas advocating “the union of peoples and the creation of a European space without borders” (Roth, 2007).

In 1946, parallel to the start of the European construction project, the Cold War also began. On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill, the former British prime minister, on an unofficial visit to the US, gave a speech on world politics at a prestigious American university. US President Harry Truman was also present. In his speech, he stated: “From Stettin in the Baltic Sea to Trieste in the Adriatic Sea, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind it lie the capitals of the old states of Central and Eastern Europe: Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia. All these beautiful capitals and the populations of these countries are now within the Soviet sphere of influence” (Păun, Păun, 1999).

Due to the Soviet occupation zone, Europe inevitably found itself in its Western part: “only there did modern institutions based on liberal democracy earn the right to shape European relations at the end of this century” (Păun, Păun, 1999).

In this unfavorable context, the integration formula became increasingly attractive to France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, which would follow the path of integration from the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris, 1951) to the Common Market (Treaty of Rome, 1957). Two possibilities were considered for achieving the union of European peoples in a European area without borders. The first option envisaged the construction of Europe “from the top to bottom” (Păun, Păun), through the drafting of a European Constitution to be adopted by the member states. However, this option seemed too radical to be accepted by Europeans. The second option envisaged a gradual union achieved in the long term. It consisted largely of creating a free trade area within one or more economic sectors (coal, steel, electricity, transport), followed by expansion into other areas, depending on the results achieved. Beyond these proposals, debates, and ideas, the following question arose: Who would be in a position to launch this initiative: a country, a group of countries, or an influential politician?

2. THE IDEA OF A UNITED EUROPE, AS ENVISIONED BY ITS FOUNDERS

French economist and politician Jean Monnet (1888-1979) devoted much of his life to the cause of European construction. In his book, “Memoirs”, Jean Monnet stated: “I have only one concern: to unite people, to solve the problems that divide them, to make them see their common interest” (Monnet, 1976).

His concern for achieving peace is evident in the following statement: "There will be no peace in Europe if states are reconstituted on the basis of national sovereignty. If European states begin to protect themselves against each other again, extensive armament will once again become a necessity" (Monnet, 1976).

Jean Monnet emphasizes that European states are not capable of ensuring the economic prosperity that Europeans need, calling for the creation of larger markets.

In his view, prosperity and social development could only be achieved if European states formed a federation or a European entity based on a homogeneous economy.

Jean Monnet is also concerned with solving the German problem. He imagines a system in which part of the industrial potential of the old Reich, which included the coal and steel resources of the Ruhr area, would be placed under the control of a European authority that would generate benefits for the other participating nations, with the aim of demilitarizing Germany. About this, Jean Monnet said, "presupposes that Europe unify and, in addition to cooperation, impose the transfer of sovereignty agreed upon by the European nations to a central union, a union that has the power to reduce customs barriers and prevent the reconstruction of nationalisms" (Monnet, 1976).

Among the ideas presented by Robert Schuman, the French foreign minister, in the Clock Room of the Quai d'Orsay Palace on May 9, 1950, regarding the importance of achieving a united Europe, the following are worth mentioning: "World peace cannot be secured without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it," "Europe will not be built all at once or according to a single plan, but through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity", "The French government proposes that Franco-German coal and steel production be placed under a High Common Authority, within an organization open to other European states. The pooling of coal and steel production will immediately ensure the establishment of common bases for economic development, a first step towards the creation of a European federation, and will change the destinies of those regions which in the past were dedicated to the manufacture of war munitions, but which were at the same time the most constant victims of conflicts" (Schuman Declaration, May 9, 1950).

Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany between 1949 and 1963, was one of the main advocates of the creation of a united and peaceful Europe. His 14-year term was marked by his efforts to support European construction and his genuine desire to reconcile Germany and France. He saw European unity as a means of rebuilding his country, and he believed that an agreement with France was essential for restoring peace in Europe. In his many speeches, Konrad Adenauer repeatedly evoked the idea of a United States of Europe based on a union of economic interests that would naturally lead to a political union. In his view, the division of the Federal Republic of Germany was the result of disagreements between European states that led to the division of Europe into two antagonistic blocs. Konrad Adenauer saw the reunification of Europe as "the end of Germany's painful division" (Adenauer Declaration). The plan to pool the coal and steel resources of France and Germany (at that time, the Federal Republic of Germany had not yet been established), presented by Robert Schuman, was seen by him as the beginning of

close cooperation between the two states. In his memoirs, Adenauer wrote: "I replied to Schuman without delay, telling him that I wholeheartedly approved of his proposal (Monnet, 1978).

Paul Henry Spaak, a Belgian politician and socialist leader who held positions in both state and international organizations, advocated for the political and economic unification of Western Europe. He supported both European unification and the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, and last but not least, he supported the European Defense Community.

Paul Henry Spaak also initiated the union of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg in the Benelux customs union and supported the accession of the United Kingdom to the European Communities. For him, uniting countries through treaties was the best way to guarantee peace and stability ("Founding Fathers," http://europa.eu/abc/foundingfathers/spaak/index_en.htm). In his speech on March 9, 1953, in Strasbourg, he emphasized the need for states to relinquish some of their sovereignty in the interests of collective security. He stated: "In all the discussions on this subject, we must not lose sight of what we consider to be our supreme interest: the consolidation of our union, on which our prosperity, our happiness, our security and perhaps even our very existence depend" (Ad hoc Assembly. Draft treaty on the status of the European Community).

3. THE IDEA OF CREATING A UNITARY EUROPE

The founders of a united Europe, Jean Monnet, Aristide Briand, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, and Paul Henry Spaak, envisaged the creation of a deeper union reflected in the idea of achieving a unitary Europe that would aim not only at a simple union of states but also at eliminating trade barriers between member states, improving and harmonizing their economic and social conditions. Thus, the first steps were taken in the transition from a united Europe to a unitary Europe and the creation of the European communities.

A unitary Europe aimed to reduce economic disparities between member states by providing them with support to achieve a uniform level of development throughout the territory covered by the unification project, so that member states could enjoy equal economic growth, giving less developed states the chance to evolve.

Once member states enjoyed economic and social equality, trade between them could be conducted freely and fairly, avoiding situations of unfair competition in which already developed states would experience even more rapid development while states suffering from economic disparities would fall even further behind (Ciocan, Tăut, Nuna, 2007).

The concept of a unitary Europe, which still underpins the European Union today, involved and continues to involve the creation of a compact Europe by reducing and even eliminating the gaps between Member States. This achievement is necessary in order to adopt uniform policies at European level that have the same impact and the same results in Member States, rather than different results such as the advantage or disadvantage of a particular Member State.

A unified unitary Europe primarily involved the creation of an area without internal borders, in which harmonious and homogeneous development could be achieved.

With the aim of supporting the creation of a unitary, harmonious, and homogeneous Europe, the three European Communities were established through two treaties, as follows: the European Coal and Steel Community through the Treaty of Paris in 1951, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community through the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

The creation of the three European Communities represented the first step towards a unified and unitary Europe and the first step towards “a harmonious development of economic activities, continuous and balanced expansion, increased stability, accelerated growth in living standards, and closer relations between member states” (Leonard, 2001).

The road would prove to be a long and arduous one, facing many challenges and overcoming many obstacles due in large part to the differing interests of European states. That is why taking the first step in this direction by creating the European Coal and Steel Community is an essential element in the history of the European construction process.

A prime example that reflects the goal of a unitary Europe is the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). After being accepted into the OECE, West Germany regained its place among European states. The most important issue that needed to be resolved in order to consolidate the “common European destiny” was the French occupation of the Ruhr area. The Ruhr basin was very important to the Germans, as was the Saar region, because during the wars they were the source of raw materials that fueled the arms and ammunition manufacturing industry. Jean Monnet drafted a project under these circumstances, which aimed to end the Franco-German conflicts and create a homogeneous Europe. This project envisaged the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

The text drafted by Jean Monnet was taken up by Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister between 1948 and 1952, and presented in his Official Declaration to the foreign press on May 9, 1950.

The proposal to create the ECSC took legal form with the signing of the **Treaty of Paris** on April 18, 1951, by the foreign ministers of France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The treaty entered into force on **July 23, 1952**. The Treaty stipulates the objective of creating a common market, eliminating excessive concentrations of economic power, creating a broad community policy, etc. It emphasizes that a unified and unitary Europe will not be created all at once, but gradually, through concrete achievements.

The ECSC represents the creation of the Common Market for Coal and Steel through the unification of the national markets of France, West Germany, the Benelux countries, and Italy. In order to create a general Community direction, this amalgamation of politics and economics represented by the European construction in its embryonic phase required impetuous thinking and the creation of European institutions to provide sustainability to this process.

The structure of the European Coal and Steel Community is based on three institutions: the High Authority, the Council of Ministers, and the Parliamentary Assembly. The structure is

completed with the establishment of a European Court of Justice, which is maintained and found in the foundations of today's European Union.

Jean Monnet wrote in his "Memoirs" about the ECSC that the provisions of the treaty had been respected and that, six months after the project had been launched, all radio stations announced: "As of this morning, February 10, 1953, there is no longer German, Belgian, French, Italian, Dutch, or Luxembourg coal, but only European coal circulating freely among us, the six countries considered to **be one and the same territory**" (Monnet, 1976).

The goal of a unitary Europe, as set out in the founding treaty of the ECSC, is to unify the national markets of the six member states in order to create a common market that will ensure homogeneous development by eliminating excessive concentrations of economic power (Treaty of Paris, 1951).

Another example that reflects the goal of a unitary Europe is the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). **The Treaty of Rome**, defined by lawmakers as a "framework treaty" that created the EEC and EURATOM, was signed at the Capitol Palace in Rome on March 25, 1957. This laid the foundations for the expansion of integration and the consolidation of the union, creating the so-called Community triangle made up of the three Communities: ECSC, EEC, and EURATOM.

The treaty aims to achieve economic, customs, and political union. The aim was to remove customs tariffs between Member States and establish a common external tariff (Dinan, 2006). In addition to the customs union, it also aimed to prohibit cartels, trusts, and other monopolistic structures within the market, encourage competition, and discourage direct state involvement in the economy, with an emphasis on the **free movement of persons, goods, capital, and services**.

The Treaty also provided for the organization of the Common Agricultural Market. The major institutions in this case are the EEC Commission, the Council of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Court of Justice, but there are also bodies involved in the creation of the customs union, such as the Economic and Social Committee.

The general objective of the EEC is illustrated in Article 2: "The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and progressively reconciling the economic policies of Member States, to promote the harmonious development of economic activities within the Community, continuous and balanced expansion [...] an accelerated improvement in the standard of living and closer relations between the States united in this Community" (EEC Treaty, part of the Treaty of Rome, 1957).

Article 3 sets out the areas of action of the EEC:

1. The abolition of customs duties and restrictions on the quantity of products exported between Member States;
2. The establishment of a common customs tariff and a common commercial policy with states outside the Community;
3. The removal of restrictions on the free movement of persons, services, and capital between member states;

4. The development of common policies for agriculture;
5. The establishment of common policies in the field of transport;
6. Establishing regulations to ensure competition;
7. Measures to coordinate the economic policies of Member States and ensure security against balance of payments imbalances;
8. Coordinating national legislation for the proper functioning of the market;
9. Creating the European Social Fund (the first European fund) to help create jobs and ensure a high standard of living;
10. The creation of the European Investment Bank;
11. The creation of close ties between countries outside the Community for better cooperation in the commercial and social fields (Păun, Păun, 1999).

The European Investment Bank (EIB), established in 1958 by Article 129 of the Treaty of Rome, had as its main role the lending of funds for projects of European interest, such as road and rail transport (European Investment Bank, http://europa.eu/institutions/financial/eib/index_ro.htm). With the rise of technology, the bank also financed projects such as airport construction and environmental programs, and supported investments by small businesses in the Member States and economic development in candidate countries and developing countries. The bank's priorities, according to Title IV, Article 130 of the Treaty of Rome, are as follows: "The bank shall facilitate, through guarantees and loans, the financing of the following types of projects:

- projects in less developed regions;
- projects aimed at modernizing or converting enterprises or activities for the benefit of the gradual establishment of the Common Market, which cannot be covered at the national level;
- projects of common interest to a number of Member States which cannot be financed entirely by them."

The EIB is a non-profit, self-financing institution that is independent of the Community budget (European Investment Bank, What does the bank do? http://europa.eu/institutions/financial/eib/ind_ex_en.htm). When it was established, the bank had a capital of one billion units of account, subscribed by the Member States. The value of the unit of account was 0.88867088 grams of fine gold (Protocol on the Statute of the European Investment Bank, Article 4). From the outset, the bank's shareholders were the Member States, which collectively participated in the bank's capital, with each country's contribution reflecting its economic strength within the Community.

As regards the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), the general objective mentioned in the treaty was to develop and modernize the atomic energy sector, considered essential for European economic growth. The EURATOM Treaty was supposed to ensure the distribution of technical knowledge, the development of safety standards for workers and the population, the free movement of experts, etc. It encountered problems, being signed after difficult

negotiations because the only country that was truly interested in this project was France (Roth, 2007). Over time, it became clear that this sector would be dominated by national models due to the separate development of civil atomic energy programs in Member States.

The Treaty establishing the European Economic Community also raises the importance of creating a **Regional Policy**. In this regard, the Preamble to the EEC Treaty referred to “harmonious development by reducing disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the less-favored areas” (Treaty of Rome, 1957, Preamble 12). The country that insisted most on laying the foundations for this policy was Italy, which was facing serious economic problems in the south, in comparison with the other Member States which enjoyed a balanced development (Bârgăoanu, 2009). Great Britain decides not to sign the Treaty of Rome and to keep a certain distance from the European unification project.

The Treaty of Rome was ratified by the parliaments of the six Member States and entered into force on **January 1, 1958**.

Article 240 of the Treaty stipulates that it was concluded for an indefinite period, unlike the ECSC, which was concluded for fifty years.

The aim of a unitary Europe, which was the basis for the establishment of the EEC and EURATOM, as enshrined in the Treaty of Rome, is to achieve a customs union, the total abolition of customs duties and quantitative restrictions and the establishment of a common external tariff.

The aim was also to create a vast area in which persons, goods, services and capitals could move freely. The free movement of goods (merchandise) from one Member State to another Member State meant harmonization of customs duty systems and common rules on health, consumer and environmental protection, plus the removal of all barriers to trade. Article 95 of the Treaty of Rome stipulates that no Member State shall have the right to impose, directly or indirectly, duties on imports of products from other Member States. All these provisions were aimed at achieving a homogeneous European area, i.e. a truly unitary Europe (Ciocan, Tăut, Nuna, 2007).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Sine quo dubium, the construction of Europe has meant, as the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman has noted, “a leap into the unknown”, taking into regard the fact that in the whole history of Europe there has never been a similar project, the project of European construction being the first of its kind.

Also, according to historiographical data, we can state that the European construction was based on the need for European peace and security, strongly affected by the two world wars (1914-1918, 1939-1944) and the permanent concern to put an end to the Franco-German rivalry and to avoid at all costs the outbreak of a Third World War.

Thanks to great intellectuals such as Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Winston Churchill, Paul Henri Spaak, Alcide de Gasperi, Altiero Spinelii and many others, the

project of European construction, which was to create a united, unified and unitary Europe, not only became possible but became a unique and successful project. The project was welcomed by all the major actors on the international relations scene all over the world, but especially by the United States of America.

The creation of the Economic Community for Coal and Steel by the Treaty of Paris signed on 18 April 1951 and ratified on 23 July 1952 by France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, which put an end to the Franco-German conflict, meant the rebirth of Europe after a long dark period characterized by wars and stagnation. Like the Phoenix bird, Europe managed to rise from its own ashes.

The creation of the Economic Community for Coal and Steel also has the merit of having realized the transition from the secure and conflict-free united Europe initially conceived by the founding fathers, to a unitary Europe, a project that has become much more complex and in which the founders brought to the forefront, in addition to security issues, those related to economic development and solidarity.

Furthermore, the creation of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community by the Treaty of Rome signed in the Capitoline Palace in Rome on March 25, 1957 and ratified on January 1, 1958, takes the project to another level and makes the transition to a de facto unitary and unified Europe with an emphasis on harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increase in stability, an accelerated rise in the standard of living and closer relations between Member States, thus shifting the European paradigm from security (essential condition for survival) to harmonious development (essential condition for increasing the quality of life of the citizens of the Member States).

Thus the success of the European construction is based on the principle theorized by Jean Monnet in his book "Memoirs", according to which European peoples will no longer be defeated or victorious peoples, but equal and united peoples, a principle that is still valid today.

The European construction in its embryonic phase was an amalgam of political and economic that required the thinking and creation of European institutions to provide stability to this process.

Today, from six member states, the European construction has now encompassed 27 member states from Western and Eastern Europe and continues to uphold the principles stipulated in the founding treaties, facing all the challenges of recent years, such as the Covid 19 pandemic, the Russian-Ukrainian war on its borders, the complicated relations with the United States of America and Trump's administration.

Romania, a member state since January 1, 2007, has enjoyed multiple benefits from the European Union during its 18 years of membership. Between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2024, Romania has received from the European Union budget a total amount of 99.288 billion euro and has paid to the EU budget 32.603 billion euro. These funds have been invested in education, health, transport and the private business environment contributing significantly to Romania's development (Ministry of Finance, 2025). Also Romania's biggest recent achievement

is the entry into the Schengen Area from January 1, 2025 consisting in the abolition of border controls on travel to and from other Schengen Member States for all Romanian citizens.

For these benefits, Romania should be grateful to the founding fathers and to the project of European construction for the opportunities received.

In conclusion, the ideas and statements of the founding fathers have kept their value until today. One of the most important statements on the European construction that is timeless was certainly made by the founding father Jean Monnet who states that: "Nothing is possible without individuals, nothing is sustainable without institutions" (Jean Monnet, 1976). This initiative of European construction has brought with it 75 years of uninterrupted peace and prosperity in Europe for which we should all be grateful. Without doubt, the European dream will go further and it will fulfill its purpose and its destiny.

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