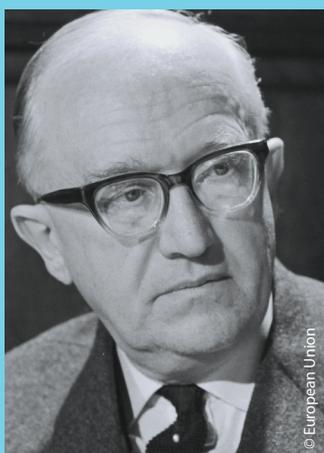


# Walter Hallstein: a diplomatic force propelling swift European integration



Walter Hallstein 1901 - 1982

*Walter Hallstein was the first President of the European Commission from 1958 to 1967, a committed European and a decisive proponent of European integration.*

*As President of the European Commission, Hallstein worked towards a rapid realisation of the Common Market. His energetic enthusiasm and powers of persuasion furthered the cause of integration even beyond the period of his presidency. During his mandate, the integration advanced significantly.*

*The one-time Secretary of State in the German Foreign Ministry originally attained international recognition through the 'Hallstein Doctrine' of the 1950s, which shaped German foreign policy for years to come, and had at its core the linking of the young democracy with western Europe.*

## Early life and wartime experiences

Walter Hallstein was born on 17 November 1901, the son of a Protestant building control officer in the south-western German city of Mainz. After graduating from the local grammar school, he studied Law and Political Science in Bonn, Berlin and Munich. In 1925 he graduated and started work as an assistant to a Professor at the University of Berlin. In 1927 he became an examiner at the University of Rostock in northern Germany, qualifying as a lecturer there in 1929. One year later he was appointed as Chair of Private and Company law, a position he would hold for the next ten years, becoming an expert in his field, a respected scholar and an internationally renowned university lecturer. He then became a Professor at the University of Frankfurt from where he was drafted into the German armed forces in 1942, despite his hostility towards Nazism. After the Allied invasion of 1944 Hallstein was taken to a prisoner of war camp in the United States where he set up a camp university of sorts to educate his fellow prisoners on the law and their rights.

After the war he was appointed Vice-Chancellor at the University of Frankfurt and in 1948 was invited by Georgetown University to

be a guest lecturer there. As one of the first German scholars to be invited to an American university, his experiences in America strengthened his conviction that Germany should join the international initiatives aimed at strengthening the bond amongst democracies after the Second World War. Joining international alliances such as the UN and NATO was, to him, pivotal in the return of Germany to the international stage.

## European Coal and Steel Community

Hallstein's excellent diplomatic skills, awareness of the need for European unity and his specialised knowledge and experience in the field, led Konrad Adenauer, then Chancellor of Germany, to appoint him as head of the delegation leading negotiations at the Schuman Conference on the forming of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950. During this time he worked closely with Jean Monnet, his French counterpart. They both soon realised that they shared fundamental beliefs on the need for European integration if Europe were to prosper again.

In 1951 Adenauer appointed Hallstein as State Secretary in the Federal Foreign Office where he was not only involved with the establishment of the ECSC, but also with an attempt to create a European Defence Community to unite the budget, forces and arms policies of the western European countries. He was also involved in negotiations with Israel over the payment of reparations to the Jewish people and played an important role in Germany's foreign relations strategy. What would later become known as the 'Hallstein Doctrine' of 1955 was a strict policy agreement that West Germany would not enter into any diplomatic relations with states recognising Eastern Germany (DDR).

## The European Economic Community

To Hallstein, the failure to create the European Defence Community in 1954 posed a very large and real threat to security in Germany and western Europe since it would be easier for the Soviet Union to extend its influence in a divided Europe. This led him to focus his energies on the economic integration process rather than the political one. Consequently, he became a staunch proponent of European unity through the forming of a European Economic Community. The first steps towards this economic integration enabling people, services and goods to travel freely 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 the Treaty of Rome came into force and Hallstein was chosen as the first President of the Commission of the European Economic Community.

## Presidency of the Commission

Although by now Hallstein realised that integration would not become a reality as fast as he would have liked, as President of the Commission he became a driving force behind the swift integration process that would follow. For instance, during his term of office, the so-called 'Hallstein period', he began the consolidation of European law which was to have a great impact on national

legislation. As a proponent of a federal Europe with a strong Commission and Parliament (to prevent the Union from constantly playing second fiddle to national governments) it is clear that he had one aim for the European Community: the vision of a united Europe as laid down in the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950. At this time, however, France's President De Gaulle had another conviction: where Hallstein thought that a federation was to be sought, meaning ceding a large part of national capacities and power to the Union, De Gaulle believed that Europe should take the confederate route, becoming a 'Europe of States', with more powers remaining in the member states. A build-up of differences between the French government and the other member states over a number of issues pertaining to this fundamental difference of opinions, led to the 'Empty Chair Crisis' in 1965, when France withdrew all of its representatives from the European institutions for some time, before a compromise was reached.

Without Hallstein's energetic enthusiasm, diplomatic negotiating skills and strong powers of persuasion, the speed of European integration witnessed during his years in office would not have been possible.



*Hallstein as President of the European Commission speaking in the Netherlands in 1965.*