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ARTICLE

# A Pan-European Economic Space with the European Community at Its Core: The EC's Goals, Actions and Achievements in Pan-European Fora in the 1970s

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As East–West détente flourished in the early 1970s, discussions on pan-European economic trade and cooperation revived. Yet an 'EC question' soon arose as socialist countries saw the European Community as an expanding protectionist entity that hampered pan-European trade and insisted on denying it recognition, let least a role in it.

This article argues that, facing this predicament, the EC endeavoured to assert itself in the continent through a careful action aimed at becoming embedded in pan-European economic cooperation and shaping its features. It explores the EC's tactics to gain its own place and weight in the two major fora of East–West discussions on the matter in the 1970s – the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – and shows its contribution to defining the agenda and proposals on trade and economic cooperation. In investigating the EC's manoeuvres and the people instrumental in these efforts, the article reveals the EC's collaboration with the UNECE Secretariat, sheds new light to the socialist states' evolving policy towards the Community and provides an unprecedented study into UNECE's life in the 1970s and its connection with the Helsinki process. By weaving these aspects together, this article characterises the EC as one of the key makers of pan-European cooperation decades before the European Union came to dominate it.

## Introduction

The onset of the Cold War divided Europe in two ideologically opposed blocs with few neutral and non-aligned states in between, and trade and economic relations were major tools of this process. The US-sponsored European Recovery Program (aka Marshall Plan) for Western Europe and the Soviet-led creation of the socialist countries' Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in response to Western actions clearly hampered the formation of a pan-European economic space. Coordinated Western boycotts of the socialist regimes, organised primarily thorough the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom), which began operations on 1 January 1950, exacerbated the economic divide of the continent.[1]

Yet already in the mid-1950s other trade and economic tools were used to promote rapprochement between the two blocs. Several international organisations tried to do so through the socialisation of

[1] Jacqueline McGlade, 'COCOM and the Containment of Western Trade and Relations', in *East–West Trade and the Cold War*, ed. Jari Eloranta and Jari Ojala (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2005), 47–62. CoCom members included non-European capitalist countries as well.

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national experts, drafting reports and proposing specific measures.[2] From the mid-1960s onwards, most European governments engaged in détente policies that used trade and economic exchanges to forge contacts and mutual obligations with states on other side of the Iron Curtain, with the intent of bypassing and/or even overcoming the Cold War divide.[3] As East–West rapprochement peaked in the early 1970s, discussions and negotiations on pan-European economic cooperation revived.

In the meantime, a new entity had blossomed within the Western bloc, namely the European Community, whose existence and policies seemed to conflict with the idea of a pan-European trade and economic space.[4] Or, at least, so was the view of the socialist regimes in the Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe. Even more than the limited European Coal and Steel Community of 1952, the creation of the European Economic Community in 1958 as a customs union with common policies and supranational institutions brought an asymmetry between the continent's economic blocs, as CMEA remained an intergovernmental organisation with no competence to negotiate trade on behalf of its members. As socialist countries saw the EC as an expanding protectionist entity that deepened the continental divide, pan-European trade and economic cooperation became part of their strategy to deal with 'the EC question'.

On the contrary, the EC saw itself as a force for good that could contribute to overcoming the East–West divide. This conceptualisation of the EC's role started in 1970 when, determined to wield the EC's economic weight in international relations, the member states established an intergovernmental mechanism to coordinate foreign policies and possibly speak with a single voice, especially on East–West relations. Their common goals were asserting the EC as a major economic and *political* actor in the continent, getting its official recognition from the socialist countries and promoting détente as a way to overcome the blocs in the long run.[5] Within this collective vision, it became clear to the EC polity that it should engage in the discussions on pan-European trade and economic cooperation as part and parcel of its newborn collective foreign policy. Concurrently to geopolitical goals, action was also necessary in order to protect the existence and interests of the EC in domains of its competence, such as trade.

This article analyses how the EC endeavoured to join multilateral discussions about pan-European economic cooperation and shape its features so as to achieve its above-mentioned goals. It will show that the EC strategy substantiated in two main actions, that is, affirming the presence of the EC *as such* in pan-European economic fora and influencing the content of proposals and accords. The analysis

[2]Sandrine Kott, *A World More Equal: An Internationalist Perspective on the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024), 99–122.

[3]The historiography of détente is vast; it comprises some wide range works such as: Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente, 1950–1991* (London: Palgrave, 2002); Jari Eloranta and Jari Ojala, eds., *East–West Trade and the Cold War* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2005); Gertrude Enderle-Burcel, ed., *Gaps in the Iron Curtain: Economic Relations between Neutral and Socialist Countries in Cold War Europe* (Crakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2009); Wilfried Loth and George-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Poul Villaume and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations and the Cold War, 1965–1985* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2010); Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow and Bernd Rother, eds., *Overcoming the Iron Curtain: Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945–1990* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012); Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, eds., *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015); Poul Villaume, Rasmus Mariager and Helle Porsdam, eds., *The 'Long 1970s': Human Rights, East–West Détente and Transnational Relations* (London: Routledge, 2016); Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume, eds., *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2017); Simo Mikkonen, Jari Parkkinen and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Entangled East and West: Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction during the Cold War* (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018).

[4]The term 'European Community' refers to the entity that, after the Merger Treaty of 1967, brought together in a single structure the European Coal and Steel Community (1952), Euratom (1958) and the European Economic Community (1958).

[5]Angela Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots: The European Community and Eastern Europe in the long 1970s', *Cold War History* 14, no. 2 (2014): 158–60. On the collective détente policy of the EC, see Angela Romano, 'The EC Nine's Vision and Attempts at Ending the Cold War', in *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945–1990*, ed. F. Bozo et al. (New York: Berghahn Books).

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will focus on two fora that in the 1970s were the major sites of East–West interactions and discussions on the matter – the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). As their names indicate, pan-European cooperation was meant 'for' and 'in' Europe rather than being restricted to European states; indeed, their membership included extra-European countries with evident involvement in European relations, for example, both superpowers. Another feature common to UNECE and the CSCE is that, although encompassing neutral and non-aligned countries, they were marked by the presence of Eastern and Western caucuses and their divergent views on how to effect cooperation between different systems. UNECE had for two decades functioned as a bridge between East and West, providing a framework where representatives from member states of the blocs could meet and discuss economic issues continually; it had also produced 'hundreds of narrowly defined agreements … with tangible benefits'.[6] On its part, the CSCE was a new diplomatic gathering (not an organisation) both product and tool of détente, where thirty-five participating states agreed to negotiate on three main areas informally called 'baskets': questions relating to security in Europe including confidence building measures (basket one), cooperation in the fields of economics, of science and technology, and of the environment (basket two) and cooperation in humanitarian and other fields (basket three).

As the main fora for East–West interactions and discussions on pan-European cooperation, UNECE and the CSCE constitute excellent observatories to investigate the EC's manoeuvres to shape a pan-European *economic* space that would suit its goals (asserting its role in the continent, getting recognition, promoting détente) as well as the socialist states' response to the EC's increasing presence in organisations/fora conceived for *states*. At the same time, with the UNECE being not only a forum for member states' negotiations but also an international organisation with its own agency and vision of pan-European cooperation, the article will investigate EC interactions with the UNECE Secretariat in order to appraise tactics, action and achievements; in so doing, it will bring to the fore the people forging these contacts. By looking into these interrelated aspects, this article aims at contributing to the historiographies of Cold War Europe, Western European integration and international organisations, as well as their connections.

In the last twenty years historiography has examined the external relations of the EC, its international role and how it was perceived by others.[7] Within this scholarship, research focusing on the Cold War has evidenced the role of the EC polity (i.e., the EC plus its member states acting collectively) in East–West relations as an unwavering and quite effective promoter of détente in the 1970s and 1980s.[8] The beginning of this collective détente policy has been identified in the CSCE experience, where the EC polity took the lead in shaping the Final Act so as to promote a pan-European cooperation encompassing human contacts.[9] By examining the EC's efforts within UNECE in the same years and putting them in relation to the EC's performance at the CSCE, this article will expand and qualify our understanding of the Community as one of the makers of pan-European cooperation.

[6]Daniel Stinsky, *International Cooperation in Cold War Europe: The United Nation as Economic Commission for Europe, 1947–64* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 241, 247. See also Yves Berthelot and Paul Rayment, *Unity and Diversity in Development Ideas: Perspectives from the UN Regional Commission* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), ch. 2.

[7]For general reference, see the recent and wide-scoped Mathieu Segers and Steven van Hecke, eds., *The Cambridge History of the European Union, Vol. 1: European Integration Outside-In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

[8]Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009); Angela Romano, 'More Cohesive, Still Divergent: Western Europe, the US and the Madrid CSCE Follow-Up Meeting', in *Europe Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s: Old Barriers, New Openings*, ed. Kiran K. Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Sara Tavani, 'The Détente Crisis and the Emergence of a Common European Foreign Policy: The "Common European Polish Policy" as a Case Study', in *Europe in a Globalizing World 1970-1985*, ed. Claudia Hiepel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014); Angela Romano, 'G-7s, European Councils and East–West Economic Relations, 1975–1982', in *International Summitry and Global Governance: The Rise of the G-7 and the European Council, 1974–1991*, ed. Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol and Federico Romero (London: Routledge, 2014); Benedetto Zaccaria, *The EEC's Yugoslav Policy in Cold War Europe, 1968–1980* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[9]Romano, *From Détente*.

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Such understanding would be incomplete without appraising how EC actions were met by the socialist countries. Thus far historians have demonstrated that the Soviet Union's hostility or at best wariness of the EC led the socialist bloc to uphold a policy of non-recognition until the Gorbachev era.[10] Yet we now know that this did not hamper European socialist regimes from developing bilateral unofficial relations and sectoral agreements with the EC, particularly from the early 1970s onwards.[11] Research into their attitudes and policies towards the Community, as well as discussions within CMEA, have revealed different national strategies to deal with the EC question, which coexisted with adherence to the bloc's official non-recognition policy.[12] We still know little about their use of fora for pan-European trade and economic cooperation to deal with the EC question. Although not concerned with the socialist bloc directly, by illustrating how EC actions in UNECE and the CSCE were met by the socialist countries this article will contribute to shedding some light on their evolving policy towards the Community and their expectations of pan-European economic cooperation.

Finally, the proposed analysis will contribute to the flourishing literature discussing the EC's role in a landscape crowded by other organisations promoting integration and cooperation in the continent way before the European Union came to dominate the scene in most domains.[13] Several scholars investigated the EC's exchange relations with other Western organisations, showing how frequently the former imported (and adjusted) rules and practices they had established. In other cases, they have revealed competition between the EC and other organisations, ascertaining a varying degree of EC success to enter domains previously not of its competence or even to supersede existing organisations over time. Sometime competition coexisted with cooperation in developing international rules.[14] Analysing the case of the 1970s discussions on pan-European economic cooperation, this article sheds light on the formative decade when the EC was struggling to get recognition from the Eastern half of Europe and to assert itself as a major player in the continent. Focusing on the pan-European economic organisation par excellence – UNECE – this article will show how the EC used its being a trade heavyweight and the EC Commission competence and technical knowledge to make room for itself in the existing wider organisation, as previously done in GATT.[15] In this endeavour,

[10]Vladislav Zubok, 'The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev', *Journal of European Integration History* 2, no. 1 (1996); Andrei, Grachev, 'The Soviet Leadership's View of Western European Integration in the 1950s and 1960s', in *Widening, Deepening and Acceleration: the European Economic Community, 1957–1963*, ed. Anne Deighton and Alan Milward (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1999); Marie-Pierre Rey, 'Le retour à l'Europe? Les décideurs soviétiques face à l'intégration ouest-européenne, 1957–1991', *Journal of European Integration History* 11, no. 1 (2005); Robert D. English, 'Soviet Elites and European Integration: From Stalin to Gorbachev', *European Review of History* 21, no. 2 (2014).

[11]Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots'.

[12]Dagmara Jajesniak-Quast, 'Reaktionen auf die Westeuropäische Wirtschaftsintegration in Ostmitteleuropa: Die Tschechoslowakei und Polen in den fünfziger bis zu den siebziger Jahren', *Journal of European Integration History* 13, no. 2 (2007); Suvi Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community: Soviet-Bloc Controversies Over East–West Trade* (Brussels: Peter Lang 2014); Elena Dragomir, 'Breaking the CMEA Hold: Romania in Search of a "Strategy" Towards the European Economic Community, 1958–1974', *European Review of History* 27, no. 4 (2020); Pál Germuska, 'Balancing between the COMECON and the EEC: Hungarian Elite Debates on European Integration during the Long 1970s', *Cold War History* 19, no. 3 (2019).

[13]Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Provincialising European Union: Co-operation and Integration in Europe in a Historical Perspective', *Contemporary European History* 22 (2013); Wolfram Kaiser and Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Multiple Connections in European Co-operation: International Organizations, Policy Ideas, Practices and Transfers 1967–92', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 24, no. 3 (2017).

[14]See the articles in the special issue 'Multiple Connections in European Cooperation: International Organizations, Policy Ideas, Practices and Transfers 1967–1992/Les connexions multiples de la coopération européenne: Organisations internationales, politiques, pratiques et échanges, 1967–1992', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 24, no. 3 (2017); Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode, 'Vanished Institutions: The Life and Death of Europe's International Organisations – Introduction', *Journal of Modern European History* 23, no. 2 (2025).

[15]Lucia Coppolaro, 'In Search of Power: The European Commission in the Kennedy Round Negotiations (1963–1967)', *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 1 (2014); Lucia Coppolaro, 'The EC in the GATT Trade Regime: A Power Without

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the EC Commission also dispatched high-level officials to build a cooperative relationship with the UNECE Secretariat as the latter elaborated reports and initiatives, so as to propagate ideas developed in Brussels (and in the Western economic organisations in which it participated). Moreover, through the exploration of the UNECE–CSCE connection, this article will demonstrate how the EC acted to both become embedded in and contribute to shaping the pan-European spaces for economic cooperation.

The arguments presented in this article are rooted in the analysis of archival sources from EC institutions (Commission and Council of Ministers) as well as UNECE, which provide key information on the EC tactics and people that were instrumental in its action, on socialist countries' reactions to EC presence and moves and on the views and agency of the UNECE Secretariat. They are supplemented with documents from the UK Foreign Office, which offer interesting perspective and details due to the country's unique position of being in the process of joining the EC precisely when the latter elaborated its collective détente policy, endeavoured to promote its specific idea of pan-European cooperation and asserted its role in it. EC and UK documents also provide information on CSCE-related aspects, including proposals under discussion and positions of other participating countries.[16]

The first section of the article deals with UNECE. After introducing the organisation and its East–West dynamics, the analysis delves into the EC's strategy to gain more visibility and weight in the organisation, as well as the contribution it made to defining the main issues of trade and economic cooperation to discuss. In this context, the interactions with the UNECE Secretariat features prominently. The second section focuses on the CSCE, more specifically on negotiations in economic basket two. Again, the analysis delves into the question of the EC's status and role, particularly the participation of representatives of the EC Commission, and how the socialist regimes' delegations reacted to it. The section then presents the positions of the two sides on the main matters under negotiation and the relationship with UNECE's works. As the Helsinki Final Act singled out UNECE for the implementation of some CSCE provisions, the third section explores the intertwining of the two fora's activities and the discussions that opposed the EC and the socialist group on the matter. Weaving all these aspects together in the conclusions, the article offers an assessment of the actions of the EC in terms of both affirming itself as a major player in pan-European fora and shaping the main features of pan-European economic cooperation.

## UNECE: The EC's Search for 'A Status More Commensurate with Our Responsibilities'

UNECE was the post-1945 pan-European economic forum par excellence: created in 1947 to promote concerted actions for post-war reconstruction and region-wide economic cooperation, it was soon confronted with the challenge of fostering cooperation between states with different economic systems and became a forum for East–West interactions. Until Stalin's death in March 1953, the Soviet Union limited its participation to the annual plenary sessions, where, in coordination with the other socialist countries, it vehemently opposed the Marshall Plan and denounced the Western embargo policy. The European socialist regimes, however, also constructively participated in the technical committees, with the Polish and the Czechoslovak delegations being quite proactive.[17] After 1954, all socialist regimes fully participated in UNECE activities; the Western and Eastern caucuses soon formed and became central in UNECE life. The institutional setting of the organisation comprised the

Leadership', in *Europe's Cold War Relations: The EC Towards a Global Role*, ed. Ulrich Krotz, Kiran Klaus Patel and Federico Romero (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

[16]The CSCE being a conference, not an organisation, it had no agency; the OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague holds conference documents, which would not add information to sources from EC and national archives.

[17]Kott, *A World More Equal*, 32–5, 42; Ondřej Fišer, 'From Internationalization to Development: Czechoslovak Economic and Scientific–Technical Cooperation in the Gottwald and Novotný eras (1948–1968)' (PhD diss., University of Geneva, 2022), 81, 83–6, 145–8.

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Secretariat staffed by international civil servants, the annual plenary session and the principal subsidiary bodies (or main committees working on specific sectors) attended by national delegations. Often informal negotiations on draft resolutions and package deals tock place in a contact group with limited but representative East–West composition.

Under the guidance of the first Executive Secretary, Swedish economics professor Gunnar Myrdal, UNECE tackled economic issues in technical terms at the level of experts in subcommittees and working groups in order to depoliticise matters as much as possible.[18] Indeed, a special ministerial meeting on the twentieth anniversary of the organisation in 1967 publicly recognised UNECE as the most important framework for East–West dialogue on all-European economic and technological cooperation.[19]

In 1969, with détente flourishing across the continent, members agreed on four priority areas of cooperation: trade, scientific and technological cooperation, long-term economic projections and planning, and environmental problems.[20] On trade, they specifically asked Executive Secretary Janez Stanovnik (appointed the previous year)[21] for a report that would prompt recommendations on the removal of economic, administrative and trade-policy obstacles.[22] Presented in 1970, the *Analytical Report on the State of Intra-European Trade* presented the Secretariat's suggested measures to harmonise norms and standards and indicated several administrative practices in both East and West that were 'inconsistent with the interest attached to east–west trade by Governments and economic organizations'.[23] However, as each side blamed the practices of the other, the UNECE trade committee debated the matter for years.[24]

It is within this framework that an 'EC question' gained momentum in UNECE due to two interrelated issues. First, possible accords on modifying practices and eliminating or reducing trade barriers necessarily required considering the EC's existence, functioning and rules. While the EC member states wanted to preserve them, the socialist countries considered them as a major hindrance to pan-European trade. This was even more resented as the EC was preparing to enlarge its membership to the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland. Second, as the EC Commission had competence to discuss and negotiate on trade matters on behalf of its members – and did so, for instance, in the GATT – the question arose of the status and participation of EC representatives in UNECE works. The matter gained momentum because at the beginning of the 1970s the EC member states finally agreed to apply the EC common commercial policy also to socialist countries; this meant that the latter should negotiate trade only with the EC Commission.[25] However, within UNECE various subregional economic organisations, including CMEA and the EC, had only observer status. In other words, the EC Commission representatives 'were merely guests of UNECE Secretariat'.[26] For the EC member states, upgrading the status of the Community and having the EC Commission as their spokesperson were

[18]Stinsky, *International Cooperation*.

[19]Evgeny Chossudovsky, *East–West Diplomacy for Environment in the United Nations* (New York: UNITAR, 1988), 14.

[20]Chossudovsky, *East–West Diplomacy*, 14.

[21]Dr Janez Stanovnik served as UNECE Executive Secretary from 1968 to 1982. Slovenian-born, graduated from the Belgrade University's Law School, member of the Yugoslav Resistance, he had been a member of the Yugoslav mission at the United Nations (1952–6), professor at the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (1958–62), then at University of Ljubljana, and advisor to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (1965–6). In 1988, he was appointed president of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia.

[22]E/ECE/747, 'The Development of Foreign Trade' ECE Resolution 3 (XXIV), 23 Apr. 1969, referenced in Berthelot and Rayment, *Unity and Diversity*, 103.

[23]ECE, *Analytical Report on the State of Intra-European Trade* (New York: United Nations, 1970), 135, referenced in Berthelot and Rayment, *Unity and Diversity*, 104.

[24]Berthelot and Rayment, *Unity and Diversity*, 104.

[25]Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots'.

[26]DGXI, Note de Ernst à Meyer, Bruxelles, 4 mai 1972, 'Rapport politique entre les Pays de l'Est et les institutions Communautaires', United Nations Archives Geneva (hereafter UNAG), GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 4 (author's translation from French),

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necessary conditions for pan-European trade discussions to lead to any agreed measures. However, strenuous opposition from the Eastern caucus was expected.

Socialist countries had voiced hostility towards Western European integration since its inception. During the 1950s, they used UNECE's annual sessions to attack the European Coal and Steel Community and then the European Economic Community, forecasting dramatic consequences for East–West trade and calling other UNECE members against rapprochement with the Western European communities. As their pessimistic prophecies found little support and ultimately proved wrong, the socialist regimes turned to denouncing the discriminatory and protectionist features of the EC's trade policy and later expressed serious concerns for the impact of its enlargement.[27] The official stance of the socialist bloc towards the EC remained one of non-recognition. Accordingly, the socialist delegations also adopted an extremely negative attitude towards the presence of EC Commission representatives. Although they could not prevent the latter from taking the floor in UNECE, they refused to interact with them or to even acknowledge their role. They also firmly opposed their participation in the unofficial contact groups tasked with drafting UNECE decisions and resolutions.

At an informal meeting on trade policy in early October 1971, the socialist countries unanimously refused to acknowledge the EC Commission representative as the spokesman of the EC states; after he spoke anyway, they pretended that no one had answered their questions. This attitude irritated the delegates of the EC member states and 'the temperature at the meeting reached such an explosive pitch that it seemed quite possible that the Six could walk out'.[28] Eventually the meeting ended with each side stating their positions and leaving it at that. Reflecting on the occurrence, the EC Commission took the meeting as a test by the socialist countries to assess the EC's cohesion on trade policy.[29] At that time, the Council of the EC had agreed on applying the common commercial policy to the socialist countries but, given their non-recognition policy, had established a transition period during which the EC member states could still negotiate bilateral trade agreements on the condition that they would expire or be denounced by the end of 1974 at the latest.[30] Therefore the socialist regimes were courting various EC states into continuing bilateral deals; coherently, they opposed acknowledging EC Commission officials in UNECE discussions.

In March 1972, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev made a speech in which he recognised 'the real situation in Western Europe, the presence of an economic group of capitalist States like the Common Market and its evolution'.[31] Yet the only noticeable effect during UNECE's 27th session of April was that Western European integration was no longer disputed; in concluding the debate on trade, the UNECE Secretary noticed that 'the whole discussion had taken place in the light of the recognition of the new economic realities of the region'.[32] Nonetheless, the socialist bloc persisted in refusing to acknowledge EC Commission representatives' presence in the meetings and rejecting their participation in unofficial East–West contact groups.

The common harsh attitude of the Eastern caucus in UNECE probably served more as a public show of adherence to the socialist bloc's official non-recognition policy, as on the EC question different attitudes were surfacing elsewhere. The enlargement of the EC created an urgent problem for most socialist regimes, whose economic strategies relied on importing equipment and technology from Western Europe, as well as some consumer goods, and paying them back via increasing

[27]DGXI, Note de Ernst à Meyer, Bruxelles, 4 mai 1972, 'Rapport politique entre les Pays de l'Est et les institutions Communautaires', UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 4–6.

[28]Telegram UK Mission Geneva to FCO Trade Policy Dept, 'ECE: Trade Committee', 8 Oct. 1971, The National Archives (hereafter: UKNA), FCO 69/242.

[29]DGXI, Note de Ernst à Meyer, Bruxelles, 4 mai 1972, 'Rapport politique entre les Pays de l'Est et les institutions Communautaires', UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 4–6.

[30]Council Regulation (EEC) 109,170 of 19 Dec. 1969, OJ 1970 L 19, cited in John Maslen, 'The European Community's Relations with the State-Trading Countries 1981–1983', *Yearbook of European Law* 3, no. 1 (1983): 325.

[31]Note, 'Discours de M. Brejnev au 15° Congres des Syndicats Soviétiques', 22 Mar. 1972, HAEU, EN-87.

[32]DGXI, Note de Ernst à Meyer, Bruxelles, 4 mai 1972, 'Rapport politique entre les Pays de l'Est et les institutions Communautaires', UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 4–6.

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exports; therefore, they needed to secure access to the EC's common market some way or another.[33] For instance, Poland, Romania and Hungary joined the GATT (in 1967, 1971 and 1973 respectively) in the hope of extracting tariff concessions from the EC and avoiding its quantitative restrictions (as the latter were contrary to GATT rules).[34] Within the GATT their delegates had started interacting with the EC Commission officials directly. Within CMEA, the socialist regimes could not agree on a common policy towards the EC, and particularly on the Soviet proposal to seek an EC–CMEA agreement that would include trade. Although only the Romanian government explicitly rejected any cession of sovereignty on such a core policy matter as trade, those of Poland and Hungary also preferred to preserve their room for manoeuvre.[35] These positions at the time were known to the EC.[36] According to the EC Commission, given the political importance that socialist regimes attached to UNECE as an organ of the United Nations, this would be the last forum where they would change attitude towards the EC, because doing so would lead to official recognition.[37]

Yet the goal of asserting the Community as a major actor in the continent required its presence and upscaled role in UNECE, now focused on pan-European economic relations. The EC states were determined to have the EC Commission as their spokesperson in pan-European discussions, especially those on trade, and ensure that any agreed measures would respect the EC's existence and competence. Finally, an EC established presence in UNECE could be conducive to softening the socialist states' stance into an eventual formal recognition of the Community. In a nutshell, UNECE was instrumental to achieving EC goals. Tactically, the EC opted for forging a closer relationship with the UNECE Secretariat as a way to both acquire more visibility and try to influence proposals. The EC Commission could build on the practice of informal connections from previous years. For instance, the ECSC High Authority had had regular contacts with UNECE, whose research division had provided it with studies on transport and the standardisation of tariffs. Moreover, ECSC representatives had attended some meetings of UNECE working groups and committees, albeit only as expert guests of the UNECE Secretariat. In the 1960s, the latter had granted observer status to several subregional organisations, including the EC.[38] It was now time to upgrade the status of the Community.

In March 1972, various departments in the EC Commission studied how to advance UNECE's work on trade; they were coordinated by the acting director-general of Directorate–General of External Trade, Theodorus Hijzen. A PhD in Economics, the fifty-eight-year-old Dutchman had been involved in the integration process since inception and was specifically a veteran of the Commission's multilateral trade policy, heading the related department since 1958.[39] He had also been the Commission's special representative and principal negotiator for the GATT Kennedy Round

[33]Angela Romano and Federico Romero, eds., *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West: National Strategies in the Long 1970s* (London: Routledge, first online 2020).

[34]Their strategy did not pay out, though. See Michael M. Kostecki, *East–West Trade and the GATT System* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Lucia Coppolaro, 'East–West Trade, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the Cold War: Poland's Accession to GATT, 1957–1967', in *East–West Trade and the Cold War*, ed. Jari Eloranta and Jari Ojala (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House, 2005); Bartosz Matyja, 'Pioneering the European Détente: Socialist Poland's Involvement with GATT and the EEC, 1957–67', *Contemporary European History*, published online (2025), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777325101185.

[35]Romano, 'Untying Cold War Knots', 160–2. Kansikas, *Socialist Countries*; Dragomir, 'Breaking the CMEA'.

[36]UK Draft Paper, 'Relations between the EEC, CMEA and Their Respective Member Countries, Including the Attitude of the Eastern Countries to European Integration', 1972, HAEU, EN 1996.

[37]DGXI, Note de Ernst à Meyer, Bruxelles, 4 mai 1972, 'Rapport politique entre les Pays de l'Est et les institutions Communautaires', UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 4–6.

[38]Stinsky, *International Cooperation*, 245–7.

[39]'Hijzen, Theodorus C.', Archive of European Integration, last modified 5 Dec. 2017, http://aei.pitt.edu/75309/. Hijzen had represented the Netherlands in the Coordinating Committee that prepared the meetings of the European Coal and Steel Community's Council of Ministers (1952–8) and served as Deputy Chief of his country's delegation at the negotiations for the Rome Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom (1955–7). As the EEC came into existence, he joined the staff of the Commission's Directorate–General for External Relations (DG I) as director of the division responsible for General Affairs and Multilateral Trade Policy. In July 1967, Hijzen became Deputy Director-General of the

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in Geneva, which had asserted the role of the EC in that forum.[40] As a heavyweight of the EC Commission, in mid-1972 Hijzen wrote to Secretary Stanovnik regarding the relations between the EC and UNECE. Although the letter started with the EC's pledge to do its 'utmost to make a positive contribution' to UNECE discussions on trade, it was actually a *cahier de doléances* regarding the treatment of the EC in the Secretary's annual report on UNECE activities.[41] For starters, Hijzen regretted that the description of the relations between UNECE and the Community did not correspond to the importance they had assumed during the past year. He also complained that the EC had been mentioned under the same heading as highly specialised organisations (e.g., Cooperation of railway administrations), whose remit and weight were not comparable. Moreover, he emphasised that 'the enormous mass of documents' which the EC Commission had published and made available to the Secretariat 'could have been publicised in the same way as the brochures distributed by the CAEM'.[42] More constructively, Hijzen reiterated the EC Commission's desire to intensify its working relationship with the Secretariat until the time the EC would be 'given a status more commensurate with our responsibilities'. Concluding on a positive note, he appreciated Stanovnik's assurance that he would personally oversee the redrafting of the paragraph on relations with the EC in next year's report.[43]

This assurance had been made to Louis Kawan, who the UNECE Secretary had recently received in Geneva.[44] Kawan was another key figure in the EC Commission: since February 1972 he was the director of the department dealing with 'Commercial relations with state trading countries within the framework of international organisations and general questions regarding these countries'.[45] Kawan maintained close relations with the UNECE Secretariat, which testifies that the EC considered the organisation as a relevant forum for defining the features of pan-European trade and cooperation. Indeed, Kawan's task was to make sure that the EC input would be taken into due account in UNECE reports and proposals, thus circumventing the Eastern caucus's refusal to discuss these matters with the EC representatives. For instance, this was visible regarding the report on the problems of industrial cooperation mandated by UNECE's 27th session, which was expected to have a great impact. Kawan had been assured by both Secretary Stanovnik and Yrjo Koskinen, who was responsible for drafting the report, that they would keep him personally and confidentially informed as the work progressed so that he could give his (the EC Commission's) preliminary reactions. Kawan indeed had lengthy conversations with Koskinen throughout the report preparation.[46]

Noticeably, it was not only the EC that sought closer collaboration with the UNECE Secretariat; the same was true the other way round. The Secretariat had its own views on how to effect pan-European economic cooperation. It had decided to focus the report on measures likely to promote cooperation

newly established Directorate–General for External Trade (DG XI), also continuing to head the division responsible for the commercial policy regarding multilateral and agricultural issues.

[40]Lucia Coppolaro, 'In Search of Power: The European Commission in the Kennedy Round Negotiations (1963–1967)', *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 1 (2014): 23–41.

[41]DGXI, Lettre de Hijzen (Directeur-Général) au Secrétaire Exécutif de l'UN ECE, Brussels, 27 Mar. 1972, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 1.

[42]DGXI, Lettre de Hijzen (Directeur-Général) au Secrétaire Exécutif de l'UN ECE, Brussels, 27 Mar. 1972, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 1–2.

[43]DGXI, Lettre de Hijzen (Directeur-Général) au Secrétaire Exécutif de l'UN ECE, Brussels, 27 Mar. 1972, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 2.

[44]DGXI, Lettre de Hijzen (Directeur-Général) au Secrétaire Exécutif de l'UN ECE, Brussels, 27 Mar. 1972, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 1.

[45]Entretien avec Edmund WELLENSTEIN par Angel Viñas, 7 nov. 2011, HAEU, *The European Commission 1973–1986: Memories of an Institution* Collection, INT316, 16. This division was initially in the DG XI Trade; following the EC enlargement, DG XI was discontinued, and its remit absorbed into a larger DG I external relations, where Kawan headed the newly named division E/01. Multilateral relations and specific trade issues with centrally planned economies, bilateral relations with planned economy countries in Europe. In various capacities, Kawan remained the man in the Commission dealing with state-trading countries in the EC Commission until 1986.

[46]DGXI, Note à Hijzen, Directeur-Général, 'Étude sur la coopération industrielle Est-Ouest entreprise par le Secrétariat de l'ECE (Nouveau Rapport Stanovnik)', Bruxelles, 25 jan. 1973, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 1.

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rather than on the identification of existing obstacles, so as to avoid polemical aspects. On tariffs, the Secretariat intended to recommend preferential treatment for cooperation agreements' imports and considered that, for political reasons, Western governments should 'do something'. Yet it was fully aware that any solution should comply with GATT rules, by which many UNECE members were bound, and also recognised that the attitude of the EC would be decisive on tariffs matters. These considerations led Koskinen to exchange views with Kawan during the drafting phase of the report. When Koskinen advanced the idea to use preferential arrangements on the basis of GATT's Article XXV by means of waivers, the EC Commission official explained that this was an extremely slow procedure that would actually complicate cooperation and that the EC was generally opposed to it. Moreover, Kawan reiterated the EC's position that improvement was needed in some Eastern countries' practices; he stressed Western exporters' necessity for a legislation that would clearly define their rights and obligations and for timely information on the socialist planner's intentions and mentioned the necessity for a faster process to negotiate cooperation contracts altogether.[47]

On the matter of obstacles to East–West trade, the EC approach was not to ask the socialist regimes 'to overhaul their economic systems from top to bottom (we'd be making fools of ourselves)', but still to point out the effects that these systems had on trade with market economies and to suggest that they themselves should draw the consequences and propose solutions. The EC for its part would help with examining how to make East–West trade more flexible compatibly with EC rules and GATT provisions.[48]

Eventually, neither works on trade nor the report on industrial cooperation achieved results. UNECE's 27th session in 1972 failed to achieve a resolution on trade due to Soviet intransigence on accepting possible changes to its practices, while other socialist countries were more willing in order to improve their possibility to export westwards. The Soviet position was partly motivated by dissatisfaction with Western (not just EC) concessions and partly a tactical decision not to engage in any agreements before the forthcoming CSCE.[49] The Secretary's *Analytical Report on Industrial Cooperation*, which was presented at UNECE's 28th plenary session (8–18 April 1973), met with a general welcome but no desire to endorse its more ambitious proposals. On most items, the general attitude was of 'wait and see', as the dominant question was what role UNECE would have in the aftermath of the CSCE – though there was clearly agreement that it should be the economic follow-up organ to CSCE at least within its traditional remit. The definition of CSCE follow-up activities also mattered for the EC's status within UNECE, which for the moment was not directly questioned; indeed, the EC Commission representative could intervene on trade.[50] Overall, during the CSCE period, plenary sessions were 'essentially a holding operation pending the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe'.[51]

## The CSCE: Establishing the EC and Its Vision at the Core of Pan-European Cooperation

In the same years of these UNECE discussions, a quasi-identical membership gathered in Helsinki and then in Geneva for the CSCE. The preparatory phase (22 November 1972 to 8 June 1973), tasked with agreeing the agenda and the rules for the CSCE, was already a tough negotiation; the original proposal, issued by the socialist bloc countries in March 1969 – the so-called Budapest appeal[52]

[47]DGXI, Note à Hijzen, Directeur-Général, 'Étude sur la coopération industrielle Est-Ouest entreprise par le Secrétariat de l'ECE (Nouveau Rapport Stanovnik)', Bruxelles, 25 jan. 1973, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357, 2–4.

[48]DGXI, Note de Ewig à Stefani, Secrétariat Général (de la Commission), Bruxelles, 30 août 1972, UNAG, GX 10-2-2-65-24,357.

[49]FCO Diplomatic Report no. 300/72, 'The 27th Session of the Economic Commission for Europe, 17 to 28 Apr. 1972', 16 May 1972, UKNA, FCO 69/324, 3–4.

[50]FCO Diplomatic Report no. 286/73, 'ECE: 28th session, Geneva, 8–18 Apr. 1973', 22 May 1973, UKNA, FCO 69/459, 2–3.

[51]FCO Diplomatic Report no. 240/74, 'Economic Commission for Europe: 29th Session, Bucharest, 18–29 April 1974', 3 May 1974, UKNA, FCO 69/492, 1.

[52]Warsaw Pact Communique, Budapest, 17 Mar. 1969.

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– only mentioned matters of security and economic cooperation, but the West, specifically the EC countries collectively, insisted on adding cooperation on human contacts, information and culture.[53] Eventually, CSCE works were organised in three commissions corresponding to the three baskets, which in turn comprised sub-commissions on specific aspects. Similar to UNECE's modus operandi, decisions were taken by consensus and bargaining also took place in restricted working groups, usually chaired by representatives of neutral and non-aligned countries as mediators.

The socialist countries gave importance to basket two, coherently pursuing East–West trade and cooperation as they sought in UNECE. In discussing its remit during bilateral talks with various Western governments, they had mentioned the goal to overcome trade barriers and protectionist groupings, specifically questioning EC policies. Thus, the EC suspected that the Soviet authorities aimed to establish a new pan-European economic order that would undermine the Community's customs union or at least give third countries a *droit de regard* over its development and practices. Consequently, in May 1971 – ahead of the CSCE preparatory phase – the EC member states agreed the principles guiding their collective stance. First, they should act in respect of EC obligations and refuse terms of pan-European cooperation that could jeopardise their integration process; second, they should reject discussing any arrangement that could strengthen the Soviet hold on European socialist countries – this specifically meant refusing the idea of an EC–CMEA agreement including trade, which Moscow was trying to push; third, the EC should pursue relations with each socialist state.[54] Evidently, the challenges of the Cold War environment lay at the core of the EC's policy.

Moreover, although the CSCE was convened among states, the EC Commission and member states saw the conference as a chance to establish the Community as a main actor in pan-European cooperation and get its recognition, *de jure* or *de facto*, from the socialist states.[55] To this purpose, EC Commission officials were included in the delegation of the member state holding the EC presidency and officially presented by the head of delegation, who indicated that they would 'express the points of view of the Community to the extent required by the Community's competence and procedures'.[56] Visibly, the EC polity was trying to have in the CSCE what still was not fully accepted in UNECE.

The socialist delegations initially protested, but the EC side was irremovable. As continual opposition might put at risk the conference, which was a socialist bloc's initiative, the socialist delegations accepted a compromise sponsored by the neutrals according to which each state could compose its delegation as it saw fit. Thereafter, the socialist delegations adopted a matter-of-fact attitude towards EC officials. Interestingly, this worked so well that no objections were made when the latter intervened even on questions other than trade on which the EC did not have exclusive competence.[57] More remarkably and consequential, the EC *as such* was a signatory of the CSCE Final Act, a matter on which the EC states had been irremovable to the point of threatening to abandon the conference.[58] The signature statement by Aldo Moro, acting as both Italy's prime minister and president of the EC Council, explicitly engaged the Community to the implementation of the CSCE provisions in all instances.[59] As the latter included UNECE activities, this meant that the EC – and thus its Commission officials – would be more prominently involved in the Geneva-based organisation.

In terms of content, CSCE basket two negotiations overlapped with UNECE's discussions on various matters. On trade, the socialist countries requested, as usual, the elimination or significant

[53]Romano, *From Détente*, 91–140.

[54]'Réunion des Ministres des Affaires étrangères, Discussion sur la CSCE', 14 May 1971, HAEU, FMM 36.

[55]Commission, SEC (71) 2362, 'Problèmes de la CSCE. Initiatives possibles des Communautés Européennes', HAEU, FMM 37.

[56]Commission Sec (73) 3280, 'Présence de la Commission pendant la 2ème phase de la Csce', Bruxelles, 13 sept. 1973, HAEU, KM 48.

[57]Note, 'Comité politique du 25 mai 1973: Coopération politique', Bruxelles, 25 mai 1973, KM 85, HAEU.

[58]Commission, Note 'Réunion du Comité Politique, le 7–8 juillet 1975 à Rome', Bruxelles, 11 juillet 1975, HAEU, KM 87.

[59]Communauté Européennes, Conseil, 'CSCE: Participation de la Communauté à la phase finale', 7 juin, 1975, Central Archives of the Council of the European Union (hereafter CACEU), File 6562.

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reduction of tariffs and quantitative restrictions applied to their exports. The EC Commission did envisage accepting the formal application of the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause, which those states already enjoyed de facto anyway. It would also concede some adjustments to quota restrictions and reduction of some customs duties, and proposed credits from the European Investments Bank. Yet the EC would not make unilateral concessions and insisted on reciprocity: socialist countries should contribute to removing obstacles to East–West trade and take into consideration the functioning of market economies. More specifically, the EC indicated the need for greater price rationality, adequate and timely information on national import/export plans, the termination of arbitrary changes in trade flows and improvements on business contacts and of the administrative, fiscal and legal conditions for Western firms operating with and in the East.[60] Moreover, the EC maintained that the CSCE provisions could not derogate to existing rules on international trade and credits and that issues in these fields should be addressed directly to the competent organisations, that is, GATT and the International Monetary Fund.[61] In a nutshell, while taking socialist countries' concerns and requests seriously, the EC conceived pan-European economic cooperation as part of the wider existing international economic system – in which the EC was already a major player. These positions clearly echoed what Kawan was telling the UNECE Secretariat in those same months.

Delegations discussed various proposals on commercial exchanges (e.g., business contacts and marketing) and trade (e.g., harmonisation of standards, arbitration). The Final Act acknowledged the application of MFN as a means likely to boost trade, but also recognised reciprocity as permitting 'an equitable distribution of advantages and obligations of a comparable scale, with respect for bilateral and multilateral agreements'.[62] Yet actual measures would have to be agreed bilaterally or multilaterally in appropriate fora.

This was also the case for other matters discussed in basket two, such as industrial cooperation, science, technology, the environment and transport. On the latter, significant differences of approach existed. The EC meant to promote a wider circulation of goods and peoples, and thus advocated the reduction of existing barriers to movements (mostly in terms of administrative practices) and the promotion of coordinated political action to rationalise and harmonise national procedures. By contrast, the socialist regimes did not want to alter their practices and were more interested in agreements on big infrastructural projects where Western countries would provide credits and advanced technology.[63] In many of these domains, the Final Act explicitly acknowledged UNECE's role in promoting pan-European cooperation and assigned it several tasks.[64] For instance, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) of UNECE was singled out from the 'existing international organizations' active in the field as the forum for an 'intensification of the work being carried out'.[65] Transport was practically and symbolically the crucial sector for effecting pan-European cooperation since the inter-war

[60]Commission, SEC(72) 3304 final/2, 'Conférence sur la sécurité et la coopération en Europe. Propositions pour une position des Communautés Européennes (Volet Coopération)', Bruxelles, 9 oct. 1972, HAEU, FMM 36.

[61]*CSCE: Economic Cooperation – Commentary on NATO Agenda Paper*, 20 Dec. 1972, UKNA, FCO 28/1705.

[62]*Final Act*, 15, 14, last accessed 30 Nov. 2025, https://resources.osce.org/helsinki-final-act.

[63]HAEU, FMM 36, Commission, SEC(72) 3304 final/2, 'Conférence sur la sécurité et la coopération en Europe. Propositions pour une position des Communautés Européennes (Volét Coopération)', Bruxelles, 9 oct. 1972; HAEU, KM 50, Note à l'attention de la Commission, *CSCE 2ème phase*, Bruxelles, 14 février 1974.

[64]Bailey and Bailey-Wiebecke, 'All-European Co-operation', 396–7. Tasks included: creating a multilateral system of notification of the laws and regulations concerning foreign trade and their variations, 'a study of the possibilities for expanding multilateral cooperative research in science and technology as well as generally making use of the ECE for sponsoring conferences which would bring together younger scientists with eminent specialists. Additionally, the CSCE recommended that a study be carried out of the procedures and relevant experience relating to the activities of governments in developing the capabilities of their countries to predict adequately the environmental consequences of economic activities and technological development'.

[65]*Final Act*, 31.

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years.[66] After 1945, several organisations were active in the field, such as the Council of Europe, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation and the ITC.[67] The ITC had proven active and efficient in promoting standardisation, conventions and multinational projects.[68] No surprise that, as the only organisation with a pan-European membership and mission, it was tasked by the CSCE to pursue works in this sector.

## The UNECE–CSCE Link: Consolidating the EC's Role and Views

And yet, after the CSCE, the Soviet government launched a new pan-European initiative in the guise of a proposal for intergovernmental conferences on energy, transport and the environment – the so-called Brezhnev proposal – and communicated it bilaterally to representatives of various CSCE states.[69] The EC Commission and member states shared the impression that the Soviet authorities envisaged these conferences outside the UNECE framework; the Italian diplomats in Moscow were explicitly told so by the Soviets, who added that UNECE could be a participant.[70] This raised some alert: why would the Soviet authorities want to bypass or delegitimate UNECE? In tackling the Brezhnev proposal, the EC proved extremely supportive of the UNECE Secretariat, and the views of the two institutions very much aligned on how to realise pan-European economic cooperation, where to discuss it and who should be certainly involved.

The EC position was indeed that the Soviet proposals should be reconducted within UNECE.[71] On this they found strong common ground with UNECE Secretary Stanovnik. Indeed, the Secretariat had prepared and then circulated a document entitled 'Future activities of the Commission', to be discussed in the 1976 plenary session. The document aimed at strengthening pan-European cooperation and UNECE's role in light of the CSCE Final Act. Stanovnik aimed to expand UNECE's role beyond information exchange and preparation of agreements on specific subjects to wider tasks effecting intergovernmental economic cooperation, based on the assumption that Europe would become more integrated economically. Stanovnik intended to identify projects of common interest in the domains mentioned in the CSCE Final Act; he also considered that UNECE should deal with energy problems, which had become more topical after the autumn 1973 oil price shock. Specifically, UNECE should not limit itself to sectoral aspects but provide short and long-term assessments of member states' energy requirements and availabilities and define common objectives.[72]

Upon Soviet request, the Brezhnev proposal was discussed at the 31st session.[73] No consensus transpired on a mandate for these ad hoc pan-European conferences; while the Eastern caucus supported the Soviet proposal, the Western caucus rallied on the position of the EC member states. The Luxembourg delegate, speaking on behalf of the EC, emphasised the connection between the Soviet

[66]Frank Schipper, *Driving Europe: Building Europe on Roads in the Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008); Johan Schot and Vincent Lagendijk, 'Technocratic Internationalism in the Inter-War Years: Building Europe on Motorways and Electricity Networks', *Journal of Modern European History* 6, no. 2 (2008).

[67]Kiran Klaus Patel and Johan Schot, 'Twisted Paths to European Integration: Comparing Agriculture and Transport Policies in a Transnational Perspective', *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 4 (2011): 388–9; Johan Schot and Frank Schipper, 'Experts and European Transport Integration, 1945–1958', *Journal of European Public Policy* 18 (2010).

[68]Schipper, *Driving Europe*, 187–258; Schot and Schipper, 'Experts and European Transport', 278.

[69]Telegram from Moscow 131330Z, 13 Feb. 1976, UKNA, FCO 98/184.

[70]Telegram no. 332 from Moscow (Sutherland), 'Soviet Proposals for Conferences on Environment, Transport and Energy', 19 Mar. 1976, UKNA, FCO 98/184.

[71]Telegram no. 28, 'European Political Cooperation: Political Committee: 16–17 February', 18 Feb. 1976, UKNA, FCO 98/184; Telegram 241700z, Callaghan, 'Political Cooperation: Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, 23 Feb: East/West Relations', 24 Feb. 1976, UKNA, FCO 98/184.

[72]EC Council, Memorandum, 'Future Activities of the Economic Commission for Europe', Brussels, 9 Mar. 1976, UKNA, FCO98-184, 2–5. UNECE had done work in the field of energy previously; For a longer perspective, see Vincent Lagendijk, 'The Structure of Power: The UNECE and East–West Electricity Connections, 1947–1975', *Comparativ* 24, no. 1 (2014).

[73]Presidency Luxembourg COREU to all COREU, 'Groupe de travail CSCE – Proposition soviétique d'organiser des conférences pan-européennes sur l'énergie, les transports et l'environnement', 26 Mar. 1976, UKNA, FCO 98/184, 2.

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initiative and the '*integral* implementation of the Helsinki Final Act' and reminded that the latter recognised UNECE as 'particularly qualified' for initiatives in those three sectors. He then drew attention to the 'intentions of the Executive Secretary' and the specific activities that his report proposed in these three domains and announced the EC endorsement. He concluded by proposing that any decision on conferences should occur after additional UNECE studies and in light of the CSCE follow-up meeting scheduled in Belgrade in autumn 1977.[74] This was indeed the decision of the session.

On 13 January 1977, the Secretariat circulated a revised version of the report on the future activities of UNECE. The report quoted substantially from the Final Act and UNECE's own documents to show the preponderant role assigned to UNECE by member states in some fields. It also dealt with ministerial-level meetings and clarified that their prime purpose would be to ensure that UNECE's 'role and authority are elevated in order to make the impact expected of it', as per the Final Act. The report made no direct references to the Brezhnev proposal.[75] Moreover, Stanovnik had clarified that he favoured UNECE activities on infrastructure – principally large-scale projects in the fields of transport and energy – and the environment, stressing the latter as 'very crucial if not decisive for the future of our region'.[76] Since the late 1960s the environment had entered the agenda of several international organisations.[77] As the matter gained momentum with the 1972 UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Stanovnik was trying to assert UNECE's role in the field.

Stanovnik's report clearly disappointed the Soviets. On 21 January, UNECE members received a copy of the letter sent by the Soviet government to the Secretariat three weeks before about the Brezhnev proposal, where it asked to 'now direct its efforts towards making it as easy as possible for member governments to find an optimum formula for the holding of such international forums and towards preparing the ground for a constructive discussion of this question' at the forthcoming 32nd session.[78] The letter also set the Soviet attitude about the relationship between the proposed conferences and UNECE:

> in duly assessing the usefulness of the work carried out in the three above-mentioned fields by existing international organisations … chiefly ECE, one cannot fail to recognise that their activities are far from measuring up to the task of intensifying and broadening international cooperation at a qualitatively new level … . It would seem particularly useful if the activities of the ECE itself … could be given an additional stimulus in the form of basic decisions on transport, energy and environmental questions adopted at a high level by European states.[79]

Moreover, a Soviet letter sent on 24 December 1976 to the Secretariat of the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union explained: 'the Soviet Union's proposed European congresses are special and independent international fora … . this question is beyond the scope of current activities of international organisations, including the Economic Commission for Europe'.[80]

The contrast between the Soviet letters and Stanovnik's report was striking. The EC considered how to maintain Soviet engagement in pan-European cooperation while securing the centrality of the CSCE process and UNECE's role in it. For sure, the Stanovnik report provided an alternative approach to the Brezhnev proposal and should thus be endorsed.[81] However, for political reasons

[74] Telegram no 106, UKMIS Geneva to FCO, 1 Apr. 1976, UKNA, FCO 98/184.
[75] Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 3.
[76] Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 4.
[77] Jan-Henrik Meyer, 'From Nature to Environment: International Organisations and the Environment before Stockholm', in *International Organizations and Environmental Protection. Conservation and Globalization in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Wolfram Kaiser and Jan-Henrik Meyer (New York: Berghahn, 2017, 50–7).
[78] Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 1.
[79] Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 1.
[80] Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 2.
[81] Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 6.

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connected to upholding détente, it deemed necessary to at least agree to one Soviet-proposed conference – environment was eventually chosen[82] – provided it would be convened within the UNECE framework and acknowledge the EC's participation in full right on matters of its competence.[83]

The EC member states gave great importance to concerting with the other non-Eastern countries ahead of the next UNECE session, so as to ensure that these EC views 'prevailed in the Western caucus and that the neutral and non-aligned members did not pursue unhelpful policies'.[84] Evidently the EC wanted to maintain control on how CSCE provisions would be implemented and make sure that UNECE would not be dismissed in this regard. Even more importantly, it aimed at hampering Soviet attempts to delegitimise both the CSCE and UNECE and move discussions to ad hoc conferences where the power dynamics would need to be renegotiated from scratch.[85] This would have entailed yet another battle to assert the EC's representation and role, a task made more difficult by the lack of exclusive competence of the EC on energy, transport and the environment.

Concurrently, the EC Commission maintained close contacts with the UNECE Secretariat about the preparation of studies in these fields. Moreover, in the aftermath of the CSCE, the EC Commission representatives participated in most of the subsidiary bodies and attended UNECE session.[86] Interactions with socialist countries also improved.[87]

The 32nd session (19–30 April 1977) did mandate the Secretariat to undertake detailed studies on the modalities and agenda for a conference on the environment, pending the results of the CSCE follow-up meeting in Belgrade.[88] The EC had insisted on the link between the CSCE and UNECE established by the Final Act because it helped consolidate the EC's presence and role in shaping the pan-European economic space. Significantly, the EC Commission appointed Louis Kawan as its 'special representative for the (CSCE)' with a view to strengthening its legitimacy as spokesperson of the EC member states on matters of its competence.[89]

The choice paid back. When, a week after the CSCE follow-up conference opened on 4 October 1977, the plenary discussed basket two, among the heads of delegations who introduced their basic theses was Kawan, presenting the EC's stance on trade. Only the Romanian delegation intervened to remark that the conference was convened between states and no organisation nor subregional grouping should be represented. The tone was quite mild, though. Indeed, the next day the head of the Romanian delegation approached Kawan privately to explain that his remarks were addressed to both East and West, but actually there was nothing against Kawan's intervention and Romania would raise no more objections.[90] In a nutshell, the intervention had meant to oppose, indirectly yet publicly, any idea of a CMEA representation, according to the well-established Romanian policy on the matter.[91] Kawan also participated in the informal contact group that organised basket two

[82]Secrétariat Général du Conseil des Communautés européennes, *Vingt-cinquième aperçu des activités du Conseil*, 1er jan.–31 déc. 1977, CACEU, 178.

[83]Secrétariat général du Conseil, Note, 'Rapport du Groupe restreint des Conseillers des Ambassadeurs concernant les propositions soviétiques relatives aux conférences paneuropéennes sur l'environnement, les transports et l'énergie', Bruxelles, 24 jan. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 23.

[84]Annexe III to General Secretariat of the (EC) Council, Note, 28 Feb. 1977, HAEU, EN-1998, 8.

[85]Angela Romano, 'Shaping Pan-European Cooperation: Soviet Initiatives and the EEC-Nine's Response', in in *Europe in a Globalizing World 1970-1985*, ed. Claudia Hiepel (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), 47–8.

[86]ECE, Thirty-Second Session (Provisional Agenda item 4(f)), Note by the Executive Secretary, 'Co-operation with Other International Organizations', 7 Feb. 1977, UKNA, FCO 58-1053.

[87]DG I, Brief, 'Relations between the Community and Eastern Europe', 1 Apr. 1977, HAEU, EN 1569.

[88]Note, 'The Handling of the Brezhnev Proposals at the 32nd Plenary Session of the ECE (Document from the Political Committee London, 2 March 1977)', Brussels, 4 Mar. 1977, EN-1998, HAEU.

[89]Commission, Secrétariat général, Note de Noël aux membres de la Commission, 'Représentation de la Communauté à la Conférence de Belgrade', Bruxelles 7 juin 1977, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU.

[90]Kawan to DG I, 'CSCE – Belgrade – Réunion principale, Rapport n° II', Belgrade 14 oct. 1977, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 2.

[91]Kawan to DG I, 'CSCE – Corbeille II: Point de vue romain', 13 oct. 1977, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 1. Dragomir, 'Breaking the CMEA hold'.

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works, together with the heads of delegations of the Soviet Union, Austria, Romania, Finland and West Germany.[92] The socialist delegates negotiated directly with the EC Commission representatives in working bodies, drafting groups and informal contact groups. Finally, Kawan's interventions also went beyond matters of EC exclusive competence and dealt with transport, economic information, migrant labour and industrial cooperation.[93] The EC presence and role in the CSCE had become a fact of life.

As for substance, the EC proposals confirmed the centrality given to business contacts and economic information, tackling several administrative impediments that in most socialist regimes made Western operators' activities quite difficult or uncertain. To socialist delegations' accusation of trade discrimination, Kawan rebutted that the EC had actually increased liberalisation and pointed out that the Community's offer for trade negotiations sent to each socialist government in autumn 1974 still awaited reply.[94] Finally, in advocating statistic harmonisation as well as the need for economic and technical data to accompany industrial cooperation contracts, the EC proposals linked to UNECE studies on the matter. The socialist states continued to criticise Western barriers to trade, albeit in quite vague terms.[95] The Soviet delegation insisted on its proposal for the three pan-European conferences and proposed to include in the Belgrade final document a note on convening them at a high political level.[96]

None of the above entered the final document of the Belgrade meeting, as the latter quickly got stuck in Cold War quarrels and mutual finger-pointing on the participants' implementation of the Final Act. The socialist countries' delegations were quite compact in trying to minimise this scheduled reviewing phase of the meeting, pretending everything was fine and refusing to be questioned on national practices. This attitude extended to basket two, where they described the implementation review as attempts by 'some delegations' to invoke the dismantlement of socialist regimes and economic systems. To these remarks, Kawan replied that the review served to identify where the obstructions to trade and cooperation lay and thus allow participants to design actions to implement the Final Act.[97] Eventually, the only meaningful result recorded in the Belgrade four-page concluding document signed on 9 March 1978 was the agreement to convene a follow-up meeting in Madrid in 1980 as well as some experts' meetings, confirming at least the general willingness to continue the CSCE process.

While the socialist states had sought new cooperation opportunities in the fields of trade, energy and transport, the EC had not considered the Belgrade meeting a chance to ask for important concessions in basket two.[98] Its priority had been rather negative, that is, not to compromise future EC's trade negotiations with each socialist country and 'not giving way on pan-European conferences' as envisaged by the Soviets, that is, outside the UNECE–CSCE framework; the latter were seen as a Soviet manoeuvre to steer cooperation in a direction more suitable to their political interests and as undermining the role of the EC in pan-European affairs.[99]

The established CSCE–UNECE link worked very well for asserting the EC's role in the pan-European economic space. In the high-level meeting on the environment, agreed at UNECE's 34th

[92]Kawan to DG I, 'CSCE – Belgrade – Réunion principale, Rapport n° II', Belgrade 14 oct. 1977, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 4.

[93]HAEU, EN 1905, Commission, Secrétariat Général, Note à l'attention de M. Ortoli, Vice-Président, *Session du Conseil Européen, les 7 et 8 avril 1978 – Sujets de la Coopération politique européenne*, 6 avril 1978.

[94]Kawan to DG I, 'CSCE – Belgrade. Rapport n° III', BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 3.

[95]Kawan to DG I, 'CSCE – Belgrade. Rapport n° III', BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 3.

[96]Proposition présentée par la délégation de l'URSS, CSCE/BM/7, Belgrade, 26 oct. 1977, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU.

[97]Kawan to DG I, 'CSCE – Belgrade. Rapport n° IV', BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 3.

[98]Kawan à Sir Roy Denman, 'Belgrade', Bruxelles, 21 février 1978, EN-1990, HAEU, 1.

[99]Note de Kawan à Sir Roy Denman, 'CSCE – Belgrade reprise de travaux', Bruxelles, 19 jan. 1978, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 1–2; Maslen to DG I, 'CSCE Follow-Up: Belgrade Meeting. Weekly Report n° XII – Period from 17 to 24 January 1978', Belgrade, 24 Jan. 1978, BAC 48/1984 N. 313, HAEU, 2.

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session and held in Geneva from 13 to 16 November 1979, the EC was represented by both the Irish minister of environment (Ireland holding the EC rotating presidency) and EC Commission's Vice-President Wilhelm Haferkamp. More importantly, the EC as such signed the *Convention on Cross-Border Atmospheric Pollution*, whose text also explicitly acknowledged its participation in full right – a first in terms of socialist countries' acceptance of such a status for the EC in an international agreement.[100]

## Conclusions

The long 1970s were a fundamental formative moment in the EC's rise as an international actor, especially in its own continent at the time when East–West relations were being renegotiated to promote cooperation. That the EC would be successful was not a given; it actually navigated perilous waters. The socialist bloc countries still adhered to a policy of non-recognition and denounced the Community as protectionist and discriminatory. These accusations were also levied in UNECE and the new-born CSCE, which in the 1970s were the key fora for intergovernmental discussions and negotiations on pan-European trade and economic cooperation. As both saw a preponderant East–West dynamic, positions diverged about where the major hindrances lay. The Western states pointed to several regulation and administrative barriers of the centrally planned economies, while socialist countries continued to denounce Western tariffs and quantitative restrictions applied to their exports and demand their elimination or reduction. They criticised specifically the EC practices and sought to use multilateral negotiations to derail or limit the forthcoming application of the EC common commercial policy to their exports.

These socialist attitudes prompted the EC into action. First, the Community was determined to defend its existence and competence, including the right of the EC Commission to act as spokesperson on trade matters wherever discussed. Second, the EC intended to assert its role as a major actor in the pan-European spaces for cooperation that were being moulded. Both goals also aimed at pushing towards the eventual official recognition of the EC by the socialist regimes. These geopolitical goals would be pursued through economic tools, yet the EC also aimed at shaping the content of pan-European economic cooperation according to its economic interests. Historiography had argued that this bold action started and was successfully implemented at the Helsinki CSCE, where the EC polity showed remarkable unity of intents and proved able to determine the fundamental features of pan-European cooperation according to its views and interests in several fields. These comprise securing the centrality of human contacts in cooperation across the blocs; establishing the EC as part of the CSCE process and the EC Commission as its spokesperson; and affirming the principle of conformity of any arrangements with existing Western-led institutions – where, incidentally, the Community was most influential (e.g., GATT).

This article has proved that the EC's goals were actually pursued simultaneously in both the CSCE and UNECE, thus signalling the existence of a coherent EC action across international fora. Moreover, looking into the activities of UNECE before and during the CSCE, this article has shown that the EC considered the Geneva-based organisation per se a relevant forum within which to progressively assert its presence and shape pan-European economic cooperation in a way compatible with its existence, rules and views. This enterprise was particularly challenging, though. UNECE pre-existed the EC and the latter had mere observer status therein; the Eastern caucus of socialist states was more cohesive and compact, while the EC member states were diluted in a wider Western caucus; the Eastern caucus had used UNECE since the beginning of the Western European integration process to vigorously denounce the Communities as protectionist and thus contrary to pan-European cooperation. Moreover, the socialist countries continued to obstruct the Community's attempts to have EC

[100]Secrétariat Général du Conseil des Communautés européennes, *Vingt-septième Aperçu des Activités du Conseil, 1er janvier–31 décembre 1979*, CACEU, 166–7.

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Commission representatives act as spokespersons of the group in UNECE sessions, working groups and committees.

This article has shown that the EC adopted a less direct approach, which ultimately proved effective. First, the EC endeavoured to elevate its status within UNECE and influence its works by cultivating closer contacts with the UNECE Secretariat. In this strategy, UNECE was no longer just a forum for negotiations, but an agent in itself, with which to engage in inter-institutional cooperation. As has been shown, pivotal in this exercise were high-level, competent officials from the EC Commission, who forged a close and fruitful collaboration with Secretary Stanovnik and his aide. Their contacts and keenness to finding solutions to East–West trade conundrums effectively gained the EC more weight at the heart of the UNECE machinery, leading to Secretariat reports that included several EC views and suggestions.

Second, during the CSCE negotiations the EC member states exploited (and contributed to) the general 'wait-and-see' attitude that dominated UNECE in order to take more vigorous action in the wider-scoped pan-European conference. The CSCE was a particularly fertile ground to pursue EC goals, because the East was in a position of demander and the participating countries defined negotiation rules from scratch; thus, the EC member states acted with determination to have the Community involved on matters of its competence. Unlike other CSCE baskets, negotiations in basket two proceeded with less difficulties and its various sub-commissions and informal contact groups allowed for the socialisation between EC Commission officials and socialist delegates. This in turn favoured a better understanding of the concerns, rules and interests of both sides and led to the acceptance of the EC representatives as regular participants.

Negotiations in CSCE basket two actually downscaled socialist countries' ideological opposition in UNECE, where their long-lasting, very hostile attitude towards EC representatives' participation changed as the CSCE went on. The EC Commission's efforts to find solutions to East–West trade issues might have favoured a relaxation of stance by many socialist governments, especially considering that the US administration at the time persisted in refusing them even the MFN treatment. By the end of the decade the EC status had reached the point of signatory of UNECE's spurred international agreements.

One may in turn question whether the EC's assertive behaviour benefited UNECE, as the latter became the target of Soviet undermining initiatives. As seen from the Kremlin, the CSCE and now UNECE were allowing the West to mould pan-European cooperation according to their views to a large extent, and the EC to assert itself as a major player and even a partner for European socialist regimes in the process. All this clashed with the Soviet goal of preserving the cohesiveness of the socialist bloc while extracting advantages from East–West cooperation *among states.* The Brezhnev proposal for major conferences to be convened outside of UNECE's remit (and in contravention of CSCE Final Act provisions) must be read in this vein. Yet the EC's acquired role and assertiveness actually benefited UNECE; the EC's defence of the centrality of the Geneva organisation's role in the construction of pan-European economic cooperation confirmed the existence of a solid relationship built between the EC Commission and the UNECE Secretariat, evident also in the EC's endorsement of Stanovnik's initiatives and determination to rally the wider Western caucus to strengthen UNECE's legitimacy and role.

Overall, the EC's strategy of CSCE–UNECE connection worked well for the pursuit of its goals, that is, asserting itself as a major player in existing and emerging pan-European fora; shaping a pan-European space for economic cooperation compatibly with its competence, views and interests; and improving relations with European socialist countries, pending the Soviet green light for official recognition. Likewise, the EC Commission's close collaboration with the UNECE Secretariat served both organisations in strengthening their role and legitimacy as builders of the pan-European economic space emerging in the 1970s.

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