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### History (1919-1946)

Born with the will of the victors of the First World War to avoid a repeat of a devastating war, the League of Nations objective was to maintain universal peace within the framework of the fundamental principles of the Pact accepted by its Members : « to develop cooperation among nations and to guarantee them peace and security ».

The first years of existence of the League of Nations were marked by great successes. In accordance with the provisions of the Pact, several international disagreements – between Sweden and Finland, and between Greece and Bulgaria – were resolved peacefully. The Locarno Agreements signed in October 1925, which marked the beginnings of a Franco-German reconciliation, were entrusted to the League. A direct consequence, Germany, beaten and excluded from the League by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, became a Member in 1926. In 1929, the delegate from France, Aristide Briand, put forward to the Assembly the very first political project of a European Federal Union.

In spite of these early successes, the League of Nations did not manage to prevent neither the invasion of Mandchuria by Japan, nor the annexation of Ethiopia by Italy in 1936, nor that of Austria by Hitler in 1938. The powerlessness of the League of Nations to prevent further world conflict, the alienation of part of its Member States and the generation of the war itself, added to its demise from 1940.

The failure, politically, of the mission of collective security of the League of nations must nevertheless not make one overlook its success in, what was from the beginning to be a secondary aspect of its objectives: international technical cooperation. Under its auspices, in fact, considerable number of conferences, intergovernmental committees and meetings of experts were held in Geneva, in areas as diverse as health and social affairs, transport and communications, economic and financial affairs and intellectual cooperation. This fruitful work was validated by the ratification of more than one hundred conventions by the Member States. The unprecedented work on behalf of refugees carried out by the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen from 1920 should also be stressed.

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