

Short biography of Georges Berthoin

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Georges Berthoin was born on 17 May 1925 in Nérac, Lot-et-Garonne, and studied at the universities of Grenoble and Harvard, as well as at the Paris Institute of Political Studies. He graduated in law and began his professional career in 1948 as Private Secretary to Maurice Petsche, French Junior Minister and then Minister for Finance. In 1950, he became Chief of Staff to the Inspector General for Administration on Special Mission for the Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne regions. There he made a significant contribution to the re-election of Robert Schuman.

Georges Berthoin's commitment to Europe first became apparent during the Second World War when, in 1940, he joined the Resistance movement, and it was confirmed during the period of his studies in the United States. His European career began in 1952 when he was recruited by Jean Monnet, President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), to become his Head of Private Office until 1955. He contributed to setting up the institutional structure of the ECSC, to the implementation of the market for coal and steel, to the establishment of the European tax and to the creation of the Official Journal.

In 1956, Georges Berthoin left Luxembourg for London in order to become Deputy Head of the Delegation of the ECSC to the United Kingdom, a post which he held for two years. In 1959, he became Deputy Chief Representative of the Commission of the European Economic Community in the United Kingdom, finally becoming its Chief Representative from 1970 until the accession of the United Kingdom to the European Communities in 1973.

As a result, Georges Berthoin followed closely the eventful progress of the United Kingdom towards accession to the European Communities: the double veto of the French President Charles de Gaulle against British membership in 1961 and 1967, the opening of negotiations in 1970 and, lastly, the signing of the Accession Treaty in 1972. His position as Chief Representative also led him to undertake various other missions for the Commission, in particular to the Soviet Union, the United States, Latin America and the People's Republic of China.

In 1973, he left the European Communities to become a founding member of the Trilateral Commission, a private organisation which advocated closer cooperation between Japan, North America and Western Europe, and of which he was co-Chairman until 1992. At the same time, from 1978 to 1981, he held the post of President of the European Movement International, of which he is still Honorary President. In 1988 and 1989, Georges Berthoin was appointed member of the Nine Wise Men Group on Africa.