

Interview with Jacques F. Poos: Benelux and cooperation in foreign policy matters (Sanem, 16 April 2004)

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[Étienne Deschamps] To go back to the subject of European political cooperation in its first stages and in its infancy, can you recall a Benelux system at that time which worked, or which, on the contrary, did not? Were there really at the time benefits to be had from cooperation among the ministries of the three Benelux countries in policy-making, and afterwards in decision-making, on international issues within the European club?

[Jacques F. Poos] Yes, yes. There was an informal agreement process, even over the telephone, between political directors and ministers, who would decide on a position before tackling meetings among the Twelve or the Fifteen or the Ten of the time. But it was not systematic. It was used for important issues.

[Étienne Deschamps] Were there no personal relationships facilitating the process?

[Jacques F. Poos] There are always personal contacts between ministers. There are more with some than with others, of course, because the chemistry between them sometimes works and sometimes does not. But among Benelux ministers, whatever their complexion, it has always worked successfully.

[Étienne Deschamps] Do you think that it still works as well today or that it will continue to do so in the future?

[Jacques F. Poos] You should not ask me that question. I am no longer there.