


Interview with Jacques F.°Poos: Luxembourg's role in the European integration process (Sanem, 16 April 2004)

Source: Interview de Jacques F. Poos / JACQUES F. POOS, Étienne Deschamps, prise de vue : Alexandre Germain.- Sanem: CVCE [Prod.], 16.04.2004. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (00:03:56, Couleur, Son original).

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URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview_with_jacques_f_poos_luxembourg_s_role_in_the_european_integration_process_sanem_16_april_2004-en-8d743c12-d8cf-40cb-b121-6aecf17af605.html

Last updated: 05/07/2016



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[Étienne Deschamps] To bring this interview to a close, Mr Poos, I'd like to ask you a very general question. In 1961, you presented a doctoral thesis on Luxembourg's position in the common market to the University of Lausanne's Faculté des Hautes Études Commerciales. How do you assess today, many years later, Luxembourg's participation in the European integration process and, furthermore, the prospects for the future?

[Jacques F. Poos] Very positively, and in 1961 no one could have imagined that Luxembourg would flourish politically and economically to such an extent — I shall explain this further — within this new grouping, called at the time the High Authority and the European Economic Community. It had been created a few years beforehand. Luxembourg has flourished economically because this environment has given us the internal market necessary for a small country that has always been cramped and confined by decisions taken elsewhere and without consulting us. We were therefore able to develop the fabric of our economy by adding a service economy to an industrial economy. This has been a success. Moreover, from a political point of view, the fears expressed at the start that Luxembourg would be the dwarf amongst giants have come to nothing — far from it.

The fact that today Luxembourg is a participant in all the European authorities — except perhaps for the European Investment Bank where it does not have a Vice-President, but that is the only exception, and the Central Bank as well, but in all the other European authorities, on an equal footing with the other Member States — has given it a political importance that the country has never known in the past, ever since its independence. It stood up for itself, but the decisions were taken elsewhere: in Paris, London or Brussels. But nowadays decisions are made with us. The Luxembourg Prime Minister, whatever his name might be, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, would amount to no more than the mayor of a town of 450 000 inhabitants were it not for the European Union. I once said that the Luxembourg Prime Minister could be compared with the mayor of Maranello. Maranello; what's that? It is the Italian town where the Ferrari plant is situated. It is near Bologna. Everybody knows — or at least the car enthusiasts do — that the Ferrari plant is in Maranello. But what if I asked what the name of the mayor of Maranello is? No one knows. Well, it would be the same for Luxembourg, were it not a member of the European Union.

[Étienne Deschamps] Thank you. Thank you very much.