

Interview with Jacques F. Poos: the role of the European Parliament in the European integration process (Sanem, 16 April 2004)

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[Étienne Deschamps] As for Parliament itself — you were a member of the Council for a long time and we mentioned that you held the Presidency of the Council on several occasions, so that was the governmental aspect — you were not a Member of the Commission, but on the other hand you are a Member of the European Parliament. What is, in your opinion, the current, and perhaps also the future role of Parliament in the European integration process? It is a very special institution, often misunderstood by the public. How would you describe the role that it could or should play in the European integration process?

[Jacques F. Poos] To reply to this very topical question, I should say — and I shall develop this concept later — that the European Parliament is the voice of the citizen in European policy. Citizens must clearly understand that through their MEPs, through the MEP that they elect, through the representative parliamentary system that defines us, they have direct entry into the formulation of European policy. It is the voice of the citizen. Parliament uses this citizen's voice in its dealings with the Commission, which it supervises and which is responsible to it. It has happened that a Commission has been forced to resign by the European Parliament. It can make recommendations to the Council — which delivers regular reports to Parliament sitting either in committee or in plenary session — by means of resolutions that it has voted by simple majority. Therefore it expresses the wishes of the people and their representatives to the Council as well.

It has an important supervisory role where the budget is concerned: supervision of the budget, and real powers in budgetary matters since here it is a co-legislator. The European Parliament has the last word in the establishment of the budget. Given that we have spoken a great deal about constitutions and future constitutions, I believe it also plays an innovative role in European integration generally. From it have emanated original ideas that have often stimulated the European process, though they may not always have been successful, such as the Spinelli treaty, which I cite as an example; European Parliament resolutions on the future Constitution; the very fact that there was a Convention — that the Intergovernmental Conference should be prepared by another means, in which national MPs, MEPs and government representatives would all sit together — this was an idea that came from the European Parliament. So it certainly has played an innovative role.