

Interview with Jacques F. Poos: the Single European Act (Sanem, 16 April 2004)

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[Étienne Deschamps] As minister of the Luxembourg Government, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and also as acting President du Council, you negotiated the Single European Act some years later, from 1985 to 1986; can you tell us what were then the institutional and also economic implications of this Agreement?

[Jacques F. Poos] It was an important Treaty, which has been somewhat neglected because we have become so used to it. The idea was that the Rome Treaty was incomplete because it was too general and what was necessary, in order to create a true common market, a large single market as it was then called, was to harmonise rather than merely abolish customs duties and establish freedom of movement. It was also necessary to agree on certain norms in order to become perfectly competitive and better protect the consumer and the environment. So these ideas were not yet mature at the time of the foundation, but suddenly the aims of consumer protection and environmental protection became the top priorities of Governments and political parties. This is why this Single Act Treaty includes a number of harmonising rules, and it was said that we had even done too much because there were some 300 directives of this type that needed to be applied in national laws up to 1992, which was the year fixed in the Treaty for the establishment of the large internal market. This project owes a great deal to Jacques Delors since he was at the time President of the European Commission. I must add that, in this instance too, everyone played the game and the national parliaments were sometimes exasperated by the constraints put upon them to transpose all those 50 000 pages into their national legislation.