

French accounts of the European integration process — an introduction

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To mark the French Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2008, the CVCE filmed and published a series of interviews with French figures who, as a result of the posts that they have held during their careers, have witnessed the European integration process and played a key role in it.

This collection of interviews, prepared and conducted by historians and legal experts, constitutes the major part of this research corpus, which brings together for the first time the personal accounts of a Prime Minister, Foreign Ministers, Ministers for European Affairs, a Governor of the Banque de France, senior officials and journalists. The figures interviewed are Pierre Bernard-Reymond, Georges Berthoin, Paul Collowald, Édith Cresson, Nicole Fontaine, Jean François-Poncet, Jean-Pierre Gouzy, Élisabeth Guigou, Catherine Lalumière, Alain Lamassoure, Jacques de Larosière, Pierre Moscovici, Jacques-René Rabier, Gabriel Robin and Hubert Védrine.

These first-hand accounts are available both in full and as a series of selected excerpts. They are accompanied by a short biography, a selected bibliography and extracts of books or documents published by the person interviewed.

The themes discussed include the Hague Congress, the Schuman Declaration, the Rome Treaties, the Council of Europe, the European policies of the Presidents of the French Republic, the road towards Economic and Monetary Union, the enlargements of the European Union, the European Convention, the European Constitution, the Treaty of Lisbon and, more generally, the question of the democratic deficit in Europe. These accounts also highlight the role played by France in the European integration process.

The issues addressed are illustrated and placed in context by a wealth of varied documentation including extracts from memoirs, press articles, cartoons, official documents, sound and video archives and photos. Although these resources are primarily intended for the research community, they may also be of interest for a wider public.

Published in October 2011, this research corpus is a new edition of a 'Special File' that was originally published in the European NAvigator digital library (www.ena.lu). It was presented on 22 October 2008 at the Maison de l'Europe in Paris, at a round table organised in cooperation with the CVCE on the subject of 'Europe: histoire(s) de(s) crises' (Crises in Europe: history and reflections).

Since this first publication, other French figures have also been interviewed in connection with the CVCE's 'Oral history of European integration' project. These include Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Jacques Delors.