

Short biography of René Steichen

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René Steichen

Chairman of the Board of Directors of SES ASTRA (originally known as the *Société européenne des satellites*)

Born on 27 November 1942 in Diekirch, Luxembourg

Education and training

- Primary and secondary education in Luxembourg
- Legal studies at the universities of Aix-en-Provence and Paris
- PhD in Economics and Finance from the Paris Institute of Political Studies
- Barrister in Luxembourg

Positions held in government and European institutions

- State Secretary for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development (1984–1989) in the first Santer-Poos Government
- Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, and Minister with responsibility for Cultural Affairs and Scientific Research (1989–1992) in the second Santer-Poos Government
- From 1992 to 1995, Luxembourg Member of the European Commission (led by Jacques Delors), responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development. He left the Commission in 1995, to be replaced by a new Luxembourg Member, Jacques Santer, the new President. The Austrian Member, Franz Fischler, took over responsibility for Agriculture.

Domestic political role

- Member of the Christian Social People's Party (CSV)
- Mayor of Diekirch (1974–1984)
- Member of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies (1984–1989)

Current positions held

- 1995–1996, Director of SES ASTRA (originally known as the *Société européenne des satellites*)
- Since 15 April 1996, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SES ASTRA S.A., SES WORLD SKIES and SES ASTRA Services Europe

Founded in Luxembourg in 1985 where it is based in Betzdorf, SES ASTRA is the largest satellite group in the world and the first in Europe.

René Steichen and Europe

René Steichen was European Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development (1992–1995) during the reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP) in 1992, which was based on a reorientation of the support policy, the move towards alignment of guaranteed prices with world levels, and the first steps made towards an environment policy with the establishment of agro-environmental measures co-financed by the Member States. At the international level, during the same period the process of establishing certain links between the CAP and World Trade Organization (WTO) standards was beginning.

René Steichen and Pierre Werner

— René Steichen was close to Pierre Werner, especially while the CSV was in the opposition, between 1974 and 1979, and Werner was Chairman of the CSV political group in the Chamber of Deputies.

— In 1993, as Minister with responsibilities for Cultural Affairs and Scientific Research, René Steichen created the Pierre Werner Prize — awarded every two years by the Cercle Artistique du Luxembourg and alternating with the Raville Prize — in order to honour the activities of Werner as Minister for Cultural Affairs from 19 September 1972 to 15 June 1974, and from 16 July 1979 to 20 July 1984.

— René Steichen was awarded the Robert Schuman Medal by the European Parliament in 1994. Pierre Werner, who also held this distinction, was a member of the Proposals Committee and supported this application.

— The idea of establishing SES in Luxembourg came from Pierre Werner, who did his utmost to make this a reality. He chaired its Board of Directors from 1989 to 1996, and later became its Honorary President (1996–2002). It was Werner who called on Steichen to join SES after his retirement from the European stage. René Steichen succeeded Pierre Werner at the head of the company, which had by then become the world's leading satellite provider. During this period, relations between the two men became closer, enabling several projects of global importance to be successfully concluded and consolidating Luxembourg's position in the area of terrestrial satellites.