

## Statement by Georges Spénale (Brussels, 20 September 1976)

**Caption:** Statement by the President of the European Parliament, Georges Spénale, to mark the signing of the Act concerning the election of the representatives of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (Brussels, 20 September 1976).

**Source:** European elections May-June 1978, 20 September 1976 Signature of the act. Luxembourg: Directorate-General for Information, [s.d.].

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“The meetings of the European Council on 12 July and the Council of Ministers on 20 September stand together as a historic milestone in the building of Europe: henceforth, the path is clear towards a Europe of citizens alongside the Europe of States.

Thus, for the Nine, European Laws to be applied directly in all the Member States — without ratification or promulgation — will no longer be imposed on their citizens without the latter having participated, through their directly elected representatives, in drawing them up. In this way, the people will at last regain an important part of their sovereignty — 20 years after the Treaties of Paris and Rome, which had already made provision for it.

In the eyes of non-member countries, in twenty months’ time, Europe will at last acquire for itself something it regards as a prerequisite for any State seeking to join the Community — a true system of parliamentary democracy, based on the dual plurality of parties and peoples.

On behalf of the European Parliament, I should like to thank the Council of Ministers for its long-awaited decision, taken in the face of real difficulties. I should also like to thank the Council and President van der Stoel for having invited me to attend the official signing on behalf of the European Parliament, which has fought so hard for this cause. I accepted not only because of the honour accorded to me, but, more importantly, because the act which has just been signed took account of many of the European Parliament’s proposals: our presence at this signing is a symbol of the agreement of our Institutions on the fundamental issues.

The Community has completed the preliminaries and the matter is now in the hands of the national governments — a page has been turned and a new chapter is opening, which will be long and, in places, very difficult.

All active supporters of Europe, wherever they may be — in governments, parliaments, parties or unions, in the streets or the fields, in the canteen or at home — must devote their energies to making sure that the necessary ratifications are forthcoming, that the national electoral laws are passed in good time, that the people feel involved and interested and that in spring 1978, when, if there are no further delays, they are called upon to vote, this first election will show the burning desire of our peoples to build a Europe of democracy, solidarity and hope.

This evening, the countdown has begun.”