

Interview with Jacques F. Poos: the political groups in the European Parliament (Sanem, 16 April 2004)

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[Étienne Deschamps] We have already mentioned the activities of the political groups. How precisely did matters proceed? And the activities of the political groups within Parliament — what is the effective or relative significance of the various political groups and thus of the balances, of the play of influence or of power between the political groups? In this instance there are two large political groups that tend to dominate the debates; how are things organised within Parliament?

[Jacques F. Poos] The constitution of the political groups in the European Parliament may be regarded as the precursor for the trans-national European political parties. They play an enormous — not a relative — but an enormous role. It is they who are to discipline the functioning of this disparate collection of 732 Members from 1 May onwards; which would be utter chaos were this discipline not imposed from the point of view of the groups and also of the groups between themselves in order to organise the presidencies of the committees and the number of members of the Bureau and so forth, and also the texts. So an enormous amount of preparatory work is done by the political groups, whose role is to promote integration. There too, Members arrive with a cultural baggage and with levels of education and skills that are completely different. The President of the group, together with his Bureau, plays a key role in trying to explain and to arrive at a common position that will then be developed in plenary session. Each group appoints a coordinator for each committee. This is also a role that is unknown outside. What is a coordinator? It is a European Member who is appointed by his political group to negotiate the issue of transport with his coordinator colleagues from the other political groups in order to adopt all the texts concerning transport. And this holds true for all the other committees. He has real power because he can return to his group and try to sell them a compromise that he has negotiated with his colleagues from the other parties.