

Interview with Jacques F. Poos: the elections to the European Parliament (Sanem, 16 April 2004)

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[Étienne Deschamps] As a European Member of Parliament, you will have taken part in an election campaign for the European elections. Have you actually experienced this lack of interest or lack of curiosity concerning European affairs and, in particular, the institution of Parliament itself?

[Jacques F. Poos] This differs from country to country, but unfortunately in Luxembourg the European campaign is held hostage by the national campaign since the elections fall on the same day, and I am one of those who regret this. In other countries, however, the political parties can allow themselves to run a European campaign *sui generis*, but there again such a campaign is often dominated by national issues. It has proved unfeasible to sever the link, at least here in Luxembourg, because the elections are held on the same date, but in other countries, I fear that this is also true, rendering it impossible to lead a campaign based exclusively on European issues and win elections on that basis. It is on record. This does not invalidate the elections, but there is a real need for an attempt by the political parties to decide on programmes and to campaign and participate in international debates concerning those issues.

[Étienne Deschamps] You mentioned Luxembourg, but in fact next June, in Belgium too the European elections will be coupled with regional elections, and now that the lists are becoming available, we know that we shall be witnessing a battle between the leadership, the people who in the end will be replaced by their alternates. They have announced this even before the voting has taken place. They will not be taking their seats in Strasbourg, so do you think that this simplifies things for the average voter, who is obviously somewhat confused?

[Jacques F. Poos] The elections, in such cases, are deemed equivalent to a sharing out of percentages among the main political groupings. This may be at municipal, national or European level. We have a clear picture of people's opinions about the major political trends — that we do have — but we do not have a proper mandate to implement this or that policy at the European level. We do not know what the voters think of the future Draft Constitution. We shall not know that.