

## Interview with Georges Berthoin: the atmosphere during the early days of the ECSC High Authority (Paris, 22 July 2005)

**Source:** Interview de Georges Berthoin / GEORGES BERTHOIN, Étienne Deschamps, prise de vue : François Fabert.- Paris: CVCE [Prod.], 22.07.2005. CVCE, Sanem (Luxembourg). - VIDEO (00:03:46, Couleur, Son original).

**Copyright:** (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

**URL:**

[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview\\_with\\_georges\\_berthoin\\_the\\_atmosphere\\_during\\_the\\_early\\_days\\_of\\_the\\_ecsc\\_high\\_authority\\_paris\\_22\\_july\\_2005-en-8d55d486-0170-4b15-8cc5-a6e94377310b.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/interview_with_georges_berthoin_the_atmosphere_during_the_early_days_of_the_ecsc_high_authority_paris_22_july_2005-en-8d55d486-0170-4b15-8cc5-a6e94377310b.html)



**Last updated:** 05/07/2016

## Interview with Georges Berthoin: the atmosphere in Luxembourg in the first days of the ECSC (Paris, 22 July 2005)

[Étienne Deschamps] What was the atmosphere like in Luxembourg when you joined Jean Monnet there in December 1952?

[Georges Berthoin] I think I could describe it as something like the organised chaos of a film set. There was a place for everyone, but at the same time, there was no bureaucratic rigidity. We were all affected by the prevailing pioneering spirit, coming as we were with widely differing horizons; there had been no complicated recruitment procedure — what I said just now demonstrates this — what drove us on was the will to succeed and each of us did a little of everything. The word ‘chaos’ is truly the right one, I believe, and Monnet appreciated this chaotic atmosphere because in it he saw a means of creating conditions that encouraged a competitive spirit in us all, and at the same time, though I am not sure if this was his clear intention, it enabled people of different nationalities to integrate. We forgot that we were German, French, Luxembourgish or Belgian... We completely forgot. We were so mixed together in this type of melting pot that this disorder made true Europeans of us. At the same time Monnet was the only one with a clear idea of where he wanted to go; we were all floundering around in his proximity, but I think that this type of disorder made us give of our best. That period did not last very long because it was impossible to work in those conditions but certainly that was the time when a spirit of cooperation first developed. What is interesting is that those who were recruited under these conditions and according to this method all turned out to be exceptional. There was no wastage. It is quite remarkable. There was some uneasiness among the staff: people wanted to have a much more clearly defined idea of what their duties were. The administration needed a normal system of book-keeping; the Directorates-General overlapped in a lack of order that proved ultimately intolerable; as a result I took it upon myself to deliver this memorandum to Monnet, in writing, because I had told him — nor was I alone in this for Max Kohnstamm, who was Secretary to the High Authority, had also told him — we asked Monnet to give us permission to put things in order. But this did not greatly interest him, for he was, how shall I put it? He was possessed by the ultimate objective. There is one thing that has perhaps been forgotten: the mistake that we made was that we thought that in ten years we would succeed in building the United States of Europe. It was a total illusion! The moment, from a so-to-speak bureaucratic point of view, for us to become responsible had arrived. Internally, there was uneasiness among the staff and, externally, we needed to earn the credibility that the chaos was gradually eroding.