

# Interview with Jacques Santer: the Treaty of Amsterdam (Sanem, 6 April 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] How did the European Commission, of which you were President, analyse the Treaty of Amsterdam, signed by the Fifteen in October 1997?

[Jacques Santer] As you are aware, we took part in the Intergovernmental Conference which led to the Amsterdam Conference — obviously within the Intergovernmental Conference we submitted our proposals and memos, and it was Mr Oreja who was responsible for interinstitutional relations, and also for the preparation of our documentation. Later on, some progress was certainly made in the Treaty of Amsterdam, and at the same time the powers of the European Parliament were broadened: codecision was introduced in many areas, as regards the internal market, at any rate. I believe that this was a really good thing. On the other hand, where we did not make much progress was both with the common foreign and security policy and also, above all, with security policy, where unanimity was retained in all areas, and that is what we criticised at the time, because that was when a commitment was made to political union. The name was also changed to political union; after Maastricht it was 'political union'. So in that respect we wanted to go further than what had been achieved. However, this was not possible and that is why we said: 'This should be postponed until other conditions prevail.' Especially the part concerning external security, because you must remember that in the meantime the Yugoslav crisis had erupted, with all its repercussions, and it became very clear that Europe was incapable of intervening; not merely because the will to do so was lacking but also because it did not possess the means to fulfil its ambitions at the time either. So we wanted to go further than what had been achieved in the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Yet with regard to the common foreign and security policy, this was a more important step forward than that for internal security because we now also enjoyed the spirit of Schengen ... We wanted to move towards bringing that within the Community remit, but we did not succeed. There the Treaty did not succeed. Only afterwards, at least I hope that this is so, will this be tackled in the Constitutional Treaty. It must also be remembered that the Treaty of Amsterdam was signed relatively early, even before the German elections, when the German Länder got a much firmer grip on federal power than had been the case before. I can well remember that, during the discussions held in Amsterdam, Chancellor Kohl was to some extent held hostage by the German Länder regarding this issue — even though progress was made in other quarters. To sum up, we made progress in various areas — for Parliament, for other policy areas — but not for that of bringing internal security into the Community remit.