


Interview with Leo Tindemans: targeted Marshall Plan aid for beneficiary countries (Brussels, 24 February 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] Did your position in the Ministry of Agriculture enable you — I am still referring to late 1940 and the early 1950s — to take part in international negotiations linked to the Marshall Plan and to the role of agriculture in the Paris OECE negotiations? Did it play a role in the transformation of agriculture in Western Europe after the war, or are these two different, quite separate things?

[Léo Tindemans] That depended. The measures that were generally referred to as the Marshall Plan were not implemented the same way in all countries. The past economic situation was taken into consideration, as was the probable future of these countries, and then the means by which they might, or could be, helped was examined. For example, Belgium never received any money. Direct aid was not given to Belgium. It was thought that Belgium had not suffered sufficiently during the conflict. Yet there were countries that received both money and technical aid, or technical advisers who came to see what might be improved. Productivity became an issue — one that used not to be mentioned before the war. Belgium did not receive any direct aid but there was a small administrative department for the Marshall Plan; as an example of what I just said, later on, much later on, there was a Minister whose name was Vlerick, André Vlerick. Well, Vlerick was a civil servant in the small Marshall Plan department in Belgium, but he prided himself on the fact, always saying: ‘I worked as an administrator of the Marshall Plan.’ But that was where — obviously under American supervision — that was where the typical situation of each country was analysed, and in the case of Belgium that of Belgium, in order to see how this country might be helped. However, the type of aid differed in each country receiving Marshall aid. We were aware that this had to be borne in mind in these proposals and in particular sectors.