

Interview with Jacques Santer: the founding and objectives of the European People's Party (Sanem, 6 April 2006)

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[Étienne Deschamps] In the mid-1970s, you were Chairman of the Luxembourg Christian Social Party, and as such, in July 1976, you participated in the establishment of the European People's Party, the EPP, in Luxembourg. What were the objectives of the EPP at that time, and what was its platform?

[Jacques Santer] It was just after the decision was taken that MEPs should be elected by direct universal suffrage that we resolved to create a party with a truly federal structure, a truly European party, in order to increase public awareness in all our countries — at the time I think there were nine of us — all the countries that were involved in the European venture. Previously, we had had the European Union of Christian Democrats; this was a federal union, just a federation of parties. We wanted to make it into a structure incorporating various political parties: a spearhead that would organise election campaigns, not just in one particular country but over the whole territory of what was at the time the European Community. So that was the idea that has lasted until now: it was essentially and exclusively the Christian Democrat parties that made up the European People's Party. At that time the first president was Mr Tindemans; a few days ago we celebrated the party's 30th anniversary in Rome. Until now there have only been four presidents: namely Tindemans, Bukman, myself and Martens. Martens has been in charge the longest because he was elected in 1990, and he has just been re-elected for a further two years. So that was the main aspect: it was to have an infrastructure available for us to draw up a manifesto, an election platform, in order to campaign for the European elections. And that was the first time that the party really played its part: in the 1979 elections.