

Short biography of Catherine Lalumière

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Short biography of Catherine Lalumière

Catherine Lalumière was born on 3 August 1935 in Rennes, and became a Senior Lecturer specialising in French administrative law. After joining the French Socialist Party, she became Member of Parliament for Gironde in 1981 following the election of François Mitterrand as French President. Mitterrand and his Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, appointed her as State Secretary for the Civil Service and Administrative Reform (22 May 1981–23 March 1983).

In 1983, she became State Secretary for Consumer Affairs in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. She represented France in the newly-established Internal Market Council; this was the beginning of her European career and gave her a chance to familiarise herself with European issues and methods.

In December 1984, Claude Cheysson was replaced by Roland Dumas, who was closer to François Mitterrand, as Minister of External Relations, and Catherine Lalumière became State Secretary for European Affairs in the government headed by Laurent Fabius (23 July 1984–20 March 1986). She was involved in key issues concerning European integration, including the accession of Spain and Portugal and the negotiations on the Single European Act and the Schengen Agreements.

From 1986 to 1989, during the first cohabitation and at the beginning of the second seven-year term of François Mitterrand, Catherine Lalumière once again became Member of Parliament for Gironde. She was a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the French National Assembly and regularly gave her views in support of European integration. She also became a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 1987. Her European commitment led to her appointment as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, a post which she held from 1989 to 1994, supported by François Mitterrand and the European Socialists.

In 1989, the end of the East-West divide resulted in the collapse of the USSR and raised the issue of former Communist countries' membership of European organisations. The Council of Europe played a vital role in the transitional period immediately after the Cold War. Initially, thanks to the relations established by Catherine Lalumière with the new leaders of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe supported these countries in their democratic and economic reforms and involved them in some of its work. Subsequently, from 1990 onwards, around 15 of these countries became full members of the Council of Europe. It was also during Catherine Lalumière's term of office, in 1993, that the Heads of State or Government took the decision to reform the mechanism of the European Convention on Human Rights.

From 1994 to 2004, Catherine Lalumière became a Member of the European Parliament (Movement of Radicals of the Left). She was a member of the Convention responsible for drafting the Charter of Fundamental Rights, whose work formed the basis of Part II of the European Constitution. From 2001 to 2004, she was Vice-President of the European Parliament. Since then she has been President of the Maison de l'Europe in Paris.