

# Transcription of the interview with Pierre Bernard-Reymond (Paris, 11 March 2009)


**Caption:** Transcription of the interview with Pierre Bernard-Reymond, State Secretary to the French Foreign Minister with responsibility for European Affairs from 1979 to 1981, Member of the European Parliament from 1984 to 1986 and from 1989 to 1999 and Senator for the Hautes-Alpes département from 2007 to 2014, carried out by the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE) on 11 March 2009 at the French Senate in Paris. The interview was conducted by Frédéric Clavert, a Researcher at the CVCE, and particularly focuses on the following subjects: France's European policy, the accession negotiations with Greece, Spain, Portugal and Romania, the development of the powers and roles of the European Parliament, the French Senate and European questions and the future prospects of the European Union.

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## 1. France's European policy

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Mr Pierre Bernard-Reymond, thank you for agreeing to give this interview.

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Not at all.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** We'll start this interview by looking at the time you spent at the State Secretariat for European Affairs. You were appointed to the post in September 1979. It was a first for the 5th Republic. Why was that post of State Secretary created? And why were you yourself appointed to it?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** I think there were political reasons and technical reasons. The political reasons were that the President of the Republic, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, was very European-minded, much more European-minded than his predecessors, and he intended to pursue a very active policy on that question. I think there was also a technical reason, which is that France was about to take over the presidency of the European Community and, given the heavy load that responsibility brought with it, it was important for the Foreign Minister, who was Jean François-Poncet, to have the assistance of a State Secretary. There were more and more ministerial-level meetings to be taken on and the Foreign Minister had to carry on with his work as Foreign Minister at the world level, but he also had to be very active in European affairs when his country held the presidency, and he therefore needed another member of the government to be able to substitute for him occasionally as chair at the council meetings. I would add that there was certainly a political reason too in that the President of the Republic had in mind to carry out a number of very important measures, and he wanted to demonstrate the importance he attached to European integration by appointing a member of his government to specialise in carrying out that function and achieving those European objectives. All the same, it was, I would say, a rather modest, rather soft, as they say, appointment, because there were actually two schools of thought in the majority which supported the President of the Republic: the one closest to him at the time, the UDF, the Union pour la démocratie française, which was both very liberal and very European; and then there were the Gaullists, who were less so. The President of the Republic didn't want a headlong clash with the Gaullist part of his majority, and I especially remember how very alert and attentive Michel Debray was to political developments involving Europe in the work of the President of the Republic. Consequently, the President was particularly keen to present that appointment as a technical aspect and a response to the extra workload to be dealt with when France would be holding the Presidency of the European Union. Actually, it went very well, in the sense that, when I was appointed, I had an opportunity to invite Michel Debray to a private dinner with me and explained to him what it was we wanted to do, and I also explained to him that, as far as I was concerned, personally, although my party allegiance was to the Christian Democrats and although I had always been very European, I was also a Gaullist because on 13 May 1958 when General de Gaulle took power, so to speak, and put an end to the 4th Republic, I was a young schoolboy at the Lycée Dominique Villars in Gap in the Hautes-Alpes, and a big lad from the Sixth

Form, as we used to say at the time, came to see me one day and said: ‘Do you know what’s going on?’ And when he explained to me what was happening, I was immediately very happy to hear that we were going to put an end to the instability of the governments we’d had in the 4th Republic, and I’ve always been very much in favour of the lines General de Gaulle took regarding the strike force, our stances in the UN Security Council and so on. Even so, I wasn’t a member of that political party because I was more European-minded than they were. We set out our positions on those guidelines and I have to say I never afterwards had any difficulties with my Gaullist friends when it came to drafting and carrying out the measures I was able to take on European affairs. So I think I was chosen because firstly I was very young, and secondly I was actually not very well known in France, and, as the President of the Republic did not want to attach too prominent, too political, too important a dimension to the setting up of the State Secretariat, which was supposed to look more like a technical State Secretariat, I think my profile to some extent tallied with that. And then I had previously been State Secretary for the Budget in France so I had had a chance to negotiate the European budget with my counterparts from the other Community countries, and I suppose the President of the Republic had taken on board that I therefore had some familiarity with European issues, in addition to my own convictions, and that was certainly also one of the reasons why I was chosen as the first person to hold the office of State Secretary for European Affairs.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** How were the roles divided between the President of the Republic, the Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister and yourself? Administratively, were you in touch with the SGCI [the Secretariat-General of the French Interministerial Committee for Questions on European Economic Cooperation]? What were your contacts with the administrative structure at the Quai d’Orsay? Did you yourselves have a small administrative structure, a small infrastructure?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes, it all had to be put together, seeing as it was a first-time creation. As you know, power recedes and shrinks, so to speak, the nearer you get to it. That’s true in every area of political life and it’s also true in the European field. When you are outside government or outside the corridors of power, you imagine that the people who hold it must have a fair amount of room for manoeuvre. Later, when you are, I was going to say, on the other side of the looking-glass, and when you are in government, you notice to start with that, globally speaking, the room for manoeuvre is not what you used to imagine, and what our fellow citizens imagine, and that globalisation, the unavoidable economic constraints, etc. considerably reduce the area left free for political action, and it’s quite natural for whatever real power is left, in a sense, to be exercised by the top man, in other words the President of the Republic, then by the Prime Minister, and in the case in point, as far as European affairs were concerned, I was in a way under the authority of people who were very European-minded. The President of the Republic, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, as I have said, and also the Prime Minister. We shouldn’t forget that Raymond Barre had been a Member of the European Commission and was himself a very staunch European. As was Jean François-Poncet, my Foreign Minister. So, let us be honest, let us be transparent: it is true that the State Secretary, whose job it also was to create that post, did not have a huge amount of power as compared to what the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister could exercise. Even so, I must say that on a number of issues I was able to give my views, if I can put it that way. In particular, I was put in charge of renegotiating the Lomé Convention, which for me is a thing I remember as being very important. As my opposite number, as president of the ACP group, I had a Senegalese, Mr Seck, with whom I had a very good understanding, and I think that we both managed to conduct the negotiations on Lomé efficiently, courteously, with mutual understanding and, all in all, it went very well, and I have excellent memories of those negotiations. As regards the administrative organisation, there is a problem which has never been resolved, and which comes across as a choice between two things: either you take the view that the man in charge of European questions within the government is, I would say, in the orbit of the Quai d’Orsay, in other words the Foreign Ministry, which is the option which has always been taken in France — in other words, European policy still depends on Foreign Affairs — or you take the view that Europe, in a sense, is still almost part of the internal affairs of each country, is an absolutely fundamental sector, and so you have the

person in charge of European issues report to the Prime Minister. And you give that person, I would say, a rank and therefore a capacity and power on a par with all the other ministries, and especially the Finance Ministry, Bercy as we say in France, at home. No country, in fact, at any rate not France, has wanted to cross that line to this day, so the State Secretary for European Affairs is still a State Secretary reporting to the Foreign Minister. It is, nevertheless, a post which by its nature cuts across every domain and by its nature ought to be active in the other ministries or in the other structures. I didn't actually have — I had a staff, of course, but I had no special administrative structure. But I did have access to and, I would say, some degree of authority with all those in the other ministries who were concerned with or had responsibility for European questions, either on an ongoing basis, like the SGCI, reporting to the Prime Minister and responsible for coordinating all the questions involving Europe, or with the ministries for this or that issue which clearly had a European dimension.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Generally speaking, when you had taken up the post of State Secretary, did European affairs in Brussels and in Paris work the way you had imagined? How did the meetings of the Nine in Brussels go?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes, well, I can just imagine what it must be like now with 27 countries. There were eight of us, plus one, making nine, when Greece joined the European Union. So things must be very different these days. But as regards the Council meetings, there was a certain familiarity, the various State Secretaries all knew each other very well, and we knew the ministers we had the opportunity to meet. And of course I remember many of my colleagues. I think the interesting side of those meetings for us was, of course, that we were representing our countries and that we were trying to make progress with uniting Europe. But, at the same time, it was all made easier by the fact that we knew each other personally and by a firm belief, which was very much shared, in the importance which had to be accorded to European integration. One was never entirely sure that there wouldn't be a setback, that there wouldn't be a hold-up in such an important process, which meant that we were very mindful of the task we had to perform and the aims we set ourselves.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** A few months before you became State Secretary, there were elections to the European Parliament. They were important elections because it was the first time there had been elections to the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage. Do you have any memories of that campaign?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes, actually they are the memories of an activist rather than of a politician. I was an activist for Europe even before I was a political activist. I remember being in Strasbourg at a big congress of an association which holds one a year and which had chosen as its theme for that year: 'The Europe of people and of nations'. I was 18. The congress was organised by what we call the 'Semaines sociales de France', which is actually now chaired by Mr Camdessus, the former Managing Director of the IMF, and I was 18 and very active when it came to European questions. I may say that my pro-European beliefs and intuitions date from a long way back. I've always thought that every generation ought to have an aim which is lofty enough to fill it with enthusiasm, so that they devote a lot of passion and a lot of time to it. And it seemed to me that for my generation, the building of Europe was something absolutely fundamental. I was born in 1944, in other words at the end of the Second World War. I've no memory of it, of course, but everything I very quickly learned about it showed me how absolutely vital it was to reconcile France and Germany. Also the fact of being able to demonstrate that we were building a continent in a spirit of democracy which could therefore serve as a model to many parts of the world seemed to me to be something absolutely fundamental. So I was seized with a determination to build Europe when I was very young, and with great force. Consequently, whenever I had the opportunity I also tried to be an activist for Europe. When I was mayor of Gap — as I had been first deputy mayor of my town, the town where I was born, in the Hautes-Alpes, in France; I was first deputy mayor for 18 years, then mayor for 18 years — I set up a Europe House, for instance, which is still there, which works well and which is a way of raising awareness of

European questions at the local level, close up, among my fellow citizens, men and women. And it has been a great happiness to me that my political responsibilities have centred on those beliefs, because I had the opportunity to be both State Secretary for European Affairs and a Member of the European Parliament three times.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** A few months before you became State Secretary, there were also some extremely important decisions taken on setting up a European Monetary System.

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Absolutely.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Were you involved in setting it up, in putting those decisions into effect?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, as I was saying to you a moment ago, the setting up of a European Monetary System was obviously something of major importance, as it was in the end the rudiments of what would later be the single currency. The European Monetary System was something the President of the Republic very firmly believed in. We shouldn't forget that the French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, had been Finance Minister for ten years. Nor should we forget that Raymond Barre was basically an economist. Nor, indeed, should we forget that that was all done in very close collaboration with Helmut Schmidt, with Germany. So it's quite obvious that it was first and foremost the men I have just mentioned who were the originators of the European Monetary System and that the State Secretary's job was more, I would say, that of a propagandist and an implementer than a decision-maker or an inspirer, let's not get carried away. Even so, I did experience the setting up of the European Monetary System as an important time in the building of a united Europe and as a step which opened up an important stage in that process.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** You mentioned Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's relationship with Helmut Schmidt. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidency was a very important time for the Franco-German tandem, where that Franco-German driving force played a part which was vital. At your level, what kind of relations did you have with your German opposite numbers? And, speaking personally, what importance do you attach to that Franco-German driving force?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, I think the Franco-German understanding was, still is and will remain absolutely fundamental to the building of Europe. There were, of course, the circumstantial reasons, firstly: the Second World War, the lessons we learned from that tragedy, and the determination, not to say that stroke of genius from the founding fathers of Europe which inspired them to say it was time to put an end to Franco-German hostility and lay the foundations for another way of seeing things. Until now, relations between peoples have been organised around two basic patterns: either imperialism, in other words the domination of one nation over all others, or nationalism. And neither of them was satisfactory for a convinced democrat, because in one case there is domination by one people over all the others, and in the other there is a confrontation — unfortunately that it is what it always leads to — a confrontation between different versions of nationalism, often to the point of war. And the stroke of genius of Europeans and the founding fathers of Europe at the time was to say: 'There is a third way of organising relations between peoples, grounded both in democracy and in freedom and based on the willingness of all sides to work together, not on domination or a desire to demand and impose.' The idea, too, that each nation in a way holds onto its rights, so that none of the countries is able to feel it is being led by the others beyond what it wants to do, also seemed very important to me. So that was a very high point, I think, combining Franco-German reconciliation and the inspiration for a new way of organising relations between peoples by integrating Europe in this way. It is, I believe, something which has lasted, not only because of what I have just told you; because of history, but it's also important because it is geopolitics which leads us there, and I don't think we can conceive of a Europe which will work unless the Franco-German driving force runs smoothly. It isn't about pushing other people aside, it isn't about creating a two-player Europe which would then be foisted



onto all the others. It's about seeing the facts for what they are: geopolitics, and the fact that if France and Germany do not get on with each other, Europe either comes to a halt or moves less fast. And I think it's very important. Of course, the role of the Franco-German driving force is perhaps slightly different in a Europe of 27 countries from what it was in a Europe of six, seven, nine, twelve or fifteen, but I think it is still something very important. At any rate that was what we believed at that time and I had good relations with my opposite number, who was Klaus von Dohnanyi, brother of the great conductor — you've probably heard of him — and we were driven by that belief, that determination, and I must say that on most of the major issues we got on very well. From time to time, as you would expect, there were some difficulties, for instance when we had to negotiate, as I remember, Mrs Thatcher's 'cheque', as we used to say. As you know, Mrs Thatcher wanted a rebate, which she in fact got. There was a moment when I had the feeling Germany had slightly abandoned us in the negotiations, but on the whole I would say things went well. You need to remember, of course, that that contact and those excellent relations between the President of the Republic, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and Helmut Schmidt were the basis for the election of the European Parliament by universal suffrage, the basis for the European Monetary System, the basis for the European Council, which to me seems to be something absolutely fundamental. I think that without the European Council, Europe would not have moved forward as it has. It's clear to see that the high points of European integration are the meetings of the European Council. And all of that happened at that time. So there really was a stage, an institutional stage in particular, at that time which in my view was an absolutely fundamental stage.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** You mentioned the Lomé Convention. Robert Schuman, back in 1950, talked about Europe's relations with Africa. But to begin with, France was the only Member State of the Community to have really well-developed relations with the African countries. That changed in 1973 when the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community. When you renegotiated the Lomé Convention, did you have any special relations with your British opposite numbers in those negotiations?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** At the time the Lomé agreements were being renegotiated, I didn't see that dichotomy very distinctly. To tell the truth, we had the feeling of representing Europe to, I would say, almost all the developing countries. That's not completely accurate because ... compared with what one might imagine nowadays, but there weren't so many ACP countries — African, Caribbean and Pacific countries — as there are now. But in the end we did feel we were really talking to the core of the developing countries. And we certainly did sense that there was a French sensibility, an English sensibility, but that wasn't something that was seen as an obstacle. And I think that from that point of view we fairly soon had a holistic, integrated vision, as regards the risk you mentioned.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Just a question about the local offices you have held: you were mayor of Gap, and you were vice-president of the General Council for the Hautes Alpes. Local authorities ... What effect does European integration have on local authorities, and can they influence the European decision-making process at any time?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, let's be honest, let's be frank about it: what local authorities are after, first and foremost, is Europe's money. What a mayor or a local councillor wants is primarily to find the financial resources to carry out his or her manifesto. And you know we have a very complicated system in France which we call the 'layer cake', which people are talking about a lot at the moment with the Balladur committee, and which involves going, so to speak, to each level of the administration to beg for the credits needed to set up a financial package for this or that scheme. So the mayor, who represents the basic unit of French democracy, applies to the General Council, the region, the state, the environment agencies, the agencies for this, that and the other, then there's still an extra level, the European level. So everyone makes a beeline for the LEADERS programmes, the programmes for this, the programmes for that. And Europe is mainly seen by local authorities as the extra body which gives them money. We need to tell it how it is. In rural areas, at any rate in France, elected representatives are also very aware of the agricultural policy

because, of course, a sizeable percentage of their fellow citizens are dependent on that agricultural policy. And you see it now, with the Minister for Agriculture, Michel Barnier, a former Member of the European Commission, as you know, deciding to recycle European aid by taking aid which until now used to go to cereal farmers, to put it briefly, and giving it to sheep producers in particular, and that has created something of a stir, which goes to show how very firmly the agricultural policy is, so to speak, rooted in everyday life in France. Now, as for the, I would say, European dimension of a local authority, there is also something which has worked pretty well, and that is the twinning schemes, whether they involve the 'original', if I can put it that way, European countries or, nowadays, the Eastern European countries. That is something we shouldn't overlook. I think that creates links at a level of proximity which is advantageous. I myself was twinned with an Italian town, Pinerolo, and a town in Bavaria, a German town, Traunstein. These are twinning arrangements which have lasted for more than 30 years and I think do have an important part to play in terms of each side getting to know the other, the ties which grow between this or that association in a town with another association, etc. Now, are locally elected representatives very interested in Europe? Not as much as I would wish, and not as much they should be. I think — you know, there are 500 000 elected representatives in France, so to some extent they are just citizens like everyone else — you have to recognise that Europe is still a rather difficult aspect to grasp, which you can see much more clearly through the constraints it seems to bring with it rather than any contributions it might bring to us.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** You mentioned your relations with Michel Debré; about a year before you were appointed as State Secretary for European Affairs, Jacques Chirac issued the Cochin appeal, which condemned a foreign party. Did you also meet Jacques Chirac? What were your relations with Jacques Chirac?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** I did not have an opportunity of talking to Jacques Chirac about European affairs in any detail. I had met him previously when I was a Member of the French Parliament and he was Minister for Agriculture. I think there was a big difference between the Cochin appeal and the policy which Jacques Chirac, as President of the Republic, was to pursue later at the European level. I have noticed that all Presidents of the Republic who come face to face with the realities of Europe and the realities of the world become more European than they were when they did not have those sorts of responsibilities. And I find that Jacques Chirac's European policy was a policy perfectly suited to someone who, like me, is a firm believer in the future of Europe and very interested in strengthening that policy.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** What view did you take of François Mitterrand's European policy?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, on the whole, I take a positive view of it. When President Mitterrand came to power, he was, I think, rather rushed by his manifesto and, in the early days, his policy, especially on the economic front, was very worrying because we did rather spend money like water and we had to devalue the franc three times. So we reached a point where ... at the crossroads, where the President of the Republic had to decide either to continue along the path he had started out on just after he was elected — and in my opinion that would have ended in France leaving Europe, because there was no way our partners could have put up for long with a country which had opted for a policy which was a long way from social democracy and was becoming extremely worrying on the economic front. So a choice had to be made and the President of the Republic, I believe under the influence of Jacques Chirac, made the right choice, in other words he opted for realism, for social democracy and, all in all, for Europe. So, as a European, I would not pass a negative judgement on the way President Mitterrand conducted European affairs after that. I would simply make a rather negative observation concerning his reaction, a long time afterwards, to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the, I would say, very fundamental reshaping of our continent with the attitude to be adopted towards the former people's democracies and, in particular, as regards German reunification. The President at the time, Mr Mitterrand, was certainly, it seems to me, extremely hesitant about German reunification, but it was also a time when the way we spoke to the Eastern European democracies — the former Eastern

European democracies — was to say to them: ‘Look, you must develop yourselves first, you must hold meetings with each other first, and then after that we’ll see if you can join the European Union.’ In other words, France was after all rather half-hearted, rather cautious when it came to the upheaval represented by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the implosion of the Soviet Union. I do think, though, that in the end the President gradually got the approach right and, all in all, President Mitterrand will be judged by history to have been one of the Presidents of the Republic who were in favour of Europe.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** As you have brought up that period, 1989–1990 and the years which followed, France held the presidency of the European Economic Community in the second half of 1989. The presidency culminated in the Strasbourg European Council in December. What view did you take of that presidency of the European Economic Community at the time? Was it a positive view or, as what you have just said appears to suggest, a rather negative one?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** I think that, on the whole, I would say that things seemed to me rather positive. What I mean is that Europe, at the end of Mr Mitterrand’s presidency, was in a position of having very good ties with our partners. And no serious mistakes had been made in the building of a united Europe. And I would say that, on the whole — apart, I was just saying, in my view, from that misconception or that false step as regards the verdict on German reunification, or his hesitations — apart from that, I think we can take the view that France played its part properly at that time as regards European integration.

## **2. The accession negotiations with Greece, Spain, Portugal and Romania**

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Can I go back briefly to the accession of Greece in 1980? What precise part did France play in that accession?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Everybody knows that the President of the Republic had the best possible relations with Konstantinos Karamanlis and that he was a firm believer in the need to help Greece join the European Union. At the same time he was very happy that the way the calendar fell meant that Greece was going to join Europe when France held the Presidency of the European Community. His interest in Greece was undoubtedly in part a historical one: we felt that the cradle of Europe, from the point of view of civilisation and culture, was rejoining Europe, which in a way had overtaken its progenitor in creating it. And then there was certainly the joy felt by democrats who saw Greece returning to democracy after the era of the colonels, and hence coming back into the democratic fold, and they knew that it would not slide back into the errors of the past, since joining the European Union is a long-term pledge of democracy, in my view. Mr François-Poncet set the negotiations in motion, and led them, but, especially towards the end of the negotiations, left me a fairly wide margin of freedom, and it fell to me to conclude the negotiations on Greece’s membership. I think the President of the Republic was satisfied because, for the official signing in Athens, he asked me to go with him and put my signature at the bottom of the parchment.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** We’ve already talked about Greek accession, but there were other negotiations at that time, too, for other accessions, those of Portugal and Spain. Valéry Giscard d’Estaing is accused of having rather held up those negotiations. What do you think? Particularly because of the agricultural questions.

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** It is true to some extent, because, at the time, we were very afraid of the impact of Spain’s joining, especially when it came to agriculture, and we were very afraid that Spanish accession would destabilise the regions in the south of France, the regions bordering on Spain, and in fact that is why the President of the Republic had created the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes, the IMPs, which were



intended to finance the economy of the south of France so they could withstand what we thought would be the shock of Spain's joining the Common Market. We were already worried, in particular, about Spanish agricultural production, which we were familiar with and which was in competition with part of the production of the south of France, but we were especially concerned at what Spain and Portugal would potentially represent in agricultural terms if those countries decided to irrigate all the land which could potentially be irrigated, particularly in Spain. And we were saying at the time that if Spain started cultivating all the land it could, we really might run into serious difficulties. So we asked for a bit of time. And one thing we should also take into account is that the President of the Republic was about to reach the end of his first seven-year term and go into the presidential elections, and I think he wanted to avoid Spanish accession happening at the same time as the presidential elections in France. I myself had to go and spend a weekend with my Spanish opposite number, Calvo Sotelo, who subsequently had a glittering career because he became Prime Minister of Spain. And I had to explain to him that we were not at all against Spain and Portugal joining the European Union, but that we needed a bit of time, and that is what happened, in fact, because in the end Spain and Portugal joined the European Union after the presidential elections were over. With hindsight, we can see that our fears were not necessarily justified, because we did indeed have rather sizeable quantities of Spanish products coming into France, agricultural products, but only a particular type of agricultural products: Mediterranean agricultural products. Conversely, though, once the border was opened, we were also able to export a lot of agricultural products to that country, and I'm thinking particularly of milk. So, when you take stock — especially considering that as soon as it joined the European Union, Spain also became a country making great progress on the industrial front, which means that it also needed to import goods — all in all, we can see that abolishing the borders between Spain and Europe was really to everyone's advantage, including France.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** You mentioned the new entrants to the European Union. The new entrants included Romania, and, in June 1997, you were rapporteur for the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs on that subject, on Romania's accession to the European Union. What were your conclusions and, with regard to today, what lessons do you draw from the accession of Romania to the European Union?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, of all the former people's democracies, Romania is the closest one to French society, if only as regards the language, as regards Romanian society, I would say. That may be one of the reasons why they gave me that job to do. Perhaps they also offloaded the task onto me because people knew it would not produce results immediately, as it was known from the start that Romania and Bulgaria would not be in the first wave of accessions to the European Union. I drew two conclusions from it: firstly, and indisputably, Romania was not ready to join, it had a huge amount of progress to make and a great many legislative reforms to incorporate into its substantive law. That was in fact true of all the countries which were candidates for accession. But there was a lot of ground to be made up on the Romanian side. And then there was a problem which is still very present, the problem, I would say, of corruption. As you know, the Commission has now passed a rather negative judgement on the progress made in that regard by Bulgaria and Romania. And it is by no means certain that over the next few months the Commission will not make a proposal to the Council for measures to make Romania and Bulgaria understand that they must move faster, more firmly and more thoroughly on that issue. I do think, though, that a major effort has been made as regards legislation. People don't appreciate what the incorporation of the EU *acquis* into their substantive law represents for those countries. It is something of the greatest importance. But above and beyond acquiring all those legal instruments, a process which is not yet complete, in fact, there is the will to implement them and the need to give effect to the laws which have been introduced. I think from that point of view there is still progress to be made.

### 3. The development of the powers and role of the European Parliament

**[Frédéric Clavert]** In 1981, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing lost the presidential election. Three years later you were elected to the European Parliament. You sat in the European Parliament until 1986, and were then re-elected as from 1989. So in 1984 there was the Fontainebleau European Council, which paved the way for a revival of the European project. But there was also the European Parliament which was trying to assert itself with a draft treaty on European Union drawn up by Altiero Spinelli and the Crocodile Club. Do you remember what that draft contained, and what view ...

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Oh yes, I remember, I remember that draft very well. I had the opportunity to talk to Altiero Spinelli about it several times. Altiero Spinelli was an extremely agreeable man, and his ideas about, and faith in, the European Union were even more so. All the same, I personally never believed in what Altiero Spinelli was doing. I was entirely in favour of the way his ideas developed, but I did not think (and I told him so) that he would get any results, for two reasons: firstly, I don't think Europe should be put together by means of constitutions. I think uniting Europe is necessarily a process of evolution, and if we want what we do to work, we would be much better advised to build Europe from treaty to treaty. I think a treaty every five or six years is the right approach. Firstly, because Europe is growing, and then because the world is moving very fast and we need to adapt to it. And then because we need to leave a little time for problems to solve themselves, for attitudes to evolve. I think a treaty does two things: it gives a chance of registering the practical progress which has been made and setting it in stone, and it is also an opportunity to lay down the lines for the next treaty. So it is an evolving process, whereas the champions of a constitution believe in some way that you must suddenly encase the European process in a sort of leaden mantle which, in my opinion, is more negative than positive. The very word 'constitution', in France at any rate, has a rigid, final connotation. Yet there is nothing more evolutionary and more gradual than the building of a united Europe. And if it is to work, it must be on that condition. So I think the idea of saying: 'We'll make a constitution as a way of somehow registering the point of no return in the building of Europe' was a mistake, with more drawbacks to it than advantages. The second reason is that we were not mature enough, in my opinion, to be setting things in stone in that way. So I always said to Mr Spinelli that he was taking a risk in wanting to set things in stone that very day, at the time, and in fact I have the same impression today. The second reason is that Mr Spinelli was very much in favour of the Commission. I myself am not at all hostile to the Commission, and I am well aware of the work it has done, and of how essential it is — I am not, as people rather tend to think ... People often say 'The French are against the Commission', and so on. The Commission's role in European integration is absolutely fundamental, but I still think that supreme power in European integration can only come from the European Council. No one can suppose that the states and the Heads of State, who have relatively substantial power in each of their countries, could delegate supreme power to people they had appointed. Fundamental executive power can only derive from the European Council. That is something that we have to accept. You have seen how President Sarkozy has run the French Presidency. You have seen how dynamically and effectively, I would say, he has done it. A President of the Commission could never do the same thing. You have to be President of the European Union to be able to do it. Besides the fact that you have to have the temperament our president has. So there needs to be a decision on that question. I think there has been one. But in Mr Spinelli's time it had not been decided, and not only that but Mr Spinelli was a supporter of the idea that supreme power in the European Union should emanate from the Commission rather than the Council. That was one of the points on which I took issue with him. I think what Mr Spinelli brought to Europe is important, because he had faith in Europe, and he was an important spur to thinking about the institutions, about the future of Europe. But I think he was mistaken both in wanting to have a constitution immediately and in wanting to have supreme power in Europe spring from the Commission, not the European Council.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** In the European Parliament, you held posts in the European People's Party, in the

European People's Party group in the European Parliament. What is the role of such a party, and also what is its identity?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, the European People's Party's role has evolved a great deal. I first got to know the European People's Party at a time when it was the voice of Christian Democracy. Christians, socially-minded people, Europeans, inspired, I would say, by the social teachings of the Church. Later on, the Christian Democratic party, or the EPP, had to make a choice: either to stay with that identity, and it would be a minority party or just a party of European non-socialists, especially when Britain joined the European Union; or to agree to broaden its appeal so as to stay in the majority or at any rate be able to talk to the Socialist Party as equals. That being so, it was forced to question its identity to some extent. It couldn't at one and the same time keep its identity fully intact and go on being a majority party, given the changes in political forces in Europe and the entry of the British Conservatives. So that was the choice it made, as you know. So it's now an important force in the European Parliament. It can talk to the other great majority party, the Socialist Party, on an equal footing. But it did mean having to take in people who have nothing to do with Christian Democracy. All the same, I think it is a perfectly acceptable solution in the sense that there are fewer and fewer differences between Christian Democracy and the other members of the European People's Party, both because Christian Democracy is no longer a major political force in Europe, and at the same time because the others have also evolved. So now the shades of difference between the various sides are less pronounced. And what we see progressively emerging is a kind of European two-party system with the Socialists on one side and the centrists and British Conservatives on the other. This is a trend which, with a bit of hindsight, seems to me healthy and inevitable.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** François Bayrou left the EPP in France ...

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** So there are national and European political issues which come up, but there is also this question of identity. So this movement towards a two-party system is challenged. How do you respond to those challenges?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** I have actually had to give a lot of thought to this question, because I myself have had to develop in the face of this situation. I personally began my political life as a member and even the joint founder and first member of parliament for this elected party, which was a centrist party, the Centre démocratie et progrès, with people like Jacques Duhamel and Joseph Fontanet, who were genuine Christian Democrats. And I spent the greater part of my political career in the centre, in centrist parties. And then, as our country became polarised and, I have to say, on the principle of doing what would be effective, I joined the UMP. And I would say that all centrists, whether they are Christian Democrats or not, have had to ask themselves this question. All the Liberals, even. There are a lot of French politicians who were in the UDF, for example, and who joined the UMP, whether we are talking about someone like Jean-Claude Gaudin, mayor of Marseilles, from within the Liberals, or in the centre with people like Jacques Barrot, the current Vice-President of the Commission, or Pierre Méhaignerie as well. So there were many of us who joined a major grouping, thinking that polarisation was leading us towards taking action inside a large coalition, a major grouping, rather than in a way being witness-bearers in a very minority position, caught between two large coalitions, the Socialists on the one hand and the UMP on the other. And I think it's the same thing at the European level. The path that François Bayrou, who is a friend I have got to know well, chose to take is a different one. François Bayrou thinks there is still some room between those two colossuses in which you can somehow exist. I am a little sceptical about that strategy. If it is just a matter of bearing witness, I agree. If it is a matter of being effective and pursuing a policy, I don't quite see how all that can be done.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** In the European Parliament, you were a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

and Security. What is the role of the committee and, as an MEP, what work did you do there?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes, I had caught the foreign affairs bug when I was State Secretary for European Affairs, and I wanted to join that committee. At the time, though, it was still a committee which did not have much power. That must be acknowledged. Firstly because a parliamentary committee does not have the same power as an executive, but also because it was, after all, a field in which to tread cautiously when it came to European affairs. European integration started, of course, with the economy and, as you can still see, the point at which you move from the economy into the sphere of politics is both a very difficult and a crucial time, because it means the devolution of a considerable amount of sovereignty to Europe by the Member States. Clearly, there is a great deal of hesitation, a great deal of reluctance in those areas, and the Member States do not want to devolve too much when it comes to foreign policy and security. Besides, as you see, the use of the word ‘security’ says a great deal from that point of view, as it was forbidden to utter the word ‘defence’. When you talked about defence in the European Parliament, you looked like a Frenchman who was very much on the warpath. It immediately made people think of the strike force and so on. The right word, the word you had to use, was ‘security’. Nowadays people are much more relaxed when it comes to talking about European defence. So the work we did in the Foreign Affairs Committee was much more a job of coordination and exploration than actually taking any decisions. In any case I think, when it comes to foreign policy, the exploratory aspect and the joint consultation aspect are what diplomacy boils down to. Even so, when you move from the executive sphere into a parliament, you are always a little frustrated that you are more of a commentator and a pioneer than a man of action.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Talking of foreign affairs, you took a special interest in relations between Europe and China ...

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** ... in the European Parliament. Are those relations particularly important? Are they crucial? And what could the European Parliament or an MEP like yourself bring to those relations?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes, I think those relations are very important, simply because China is important. China has woken up, and tomorrow China will be *the* world power or one of the great world powers, if it does not fall apart, of course. If China remains what it is and carries on developing its economy, it will become, if it isn’t already, a key partner for the whole international community. So it is very important that we grasp that fact and draw the necessary lessons from it. That is why I was actually very glad to be part of the Europe–China group, to go to Beijing several times and to give thought to how China’s influence could expand over the next 20 or 30 years. Things never turn out exactly as one had foreseen, I think. I think they never happen as quickly as people say. I think the United States and the West, I was going to say ‘still have what it takes’, at any rate are much more robust than people say or think. But there is no doubt, at the same time, that the world is moving towards a multipolar system, and one of the vital players in that multipolar system will certainly be China, unless it runs into fundamental problems of disintegration. I think, in fact, that it is so aware of it that it does not tolerate anything which could be a move in that direction. Its attitude towards Tibet is a blatant example. So if China remains a unitary power, if China goes on being China, it will certainly, after the recession has had its effects, of course, it will certainly have an absolutely fundamental part to play. And Europe needs to give thought to this new situation, and perhaps learn lessons from it for its relations with other parts of the world — I am thinking of Russia in particular. I think we must avoid falling into the Cold War reflexes which could arise again with regard to Russia. Russia has always been a nation which is fairly anxious about its ‘hinterland’. That is what has been called the obsessional fever of Russia, and then of the Soviet Union. It always needs a buffer zone, it is always afraid of unpleasant things happening on its borders. So it is important to reassure Russia, albeit without putting up with whatever it does. And I think the Euro-Russian partnership is something vitally important and absolutely fundamental.

And I think that if we were able to allay Russia's anxieties, if we could make it understand that we have shared interests, if we could make it understand that we have interests in common which complement each other, I think we could successfully solve a number of problems, outside our respective spheres of influence, which would be very important. For example, relations between Russia and Iran at the moment, and the way Russia is developing in a number of other countries in the world, its attitude, shows that it would be in our interest, in Europe, to have an understanding with Russia. That, of course, means we will have a job persuading the countries which recently joined the European Union, which — quite legitimately — still have strong preventative reflexes with respect to that country, which dominated them and kept them under its yoke for years and years. And it's also, I think, the way we have to speak to the United States, which must understand that the attitude Europe has to have to Russia does not exactly mirror the attitude the United States may have, even though Barack Obama's new diplomatic policy seems to be fairly close to what Europe ought to be doing, that is, speaking openly, having a partnership with it. So I think it's important for us to learn the lessons of what we must do with China, in our relations with other countries, too, such as Russia. That does not mean, however, that our attitude to China should be one of fear or reserve. On the contrary, the way we approach China should be in terms of constructing a global society, of creating a partnership to organise the world's affairs. And from that point of view the setting up of the G20, which was argued for and carried through by the President of the French Republic, seems to me very important. It's no longer now a question of the governing of the world being shared out across the northern hemisphere and/or just among Westerners. What we really need to do is be aware of how those countries are developing, involve them in running the world's affairs and act in such a way that, wherever possible, both sides are agreed on stamping out any tendency towards conflict, which unfortunately is still to be found almost everywhere in the world, and I am thinking particularly of the conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Throughout the terms you served as a Member of the European Parliament, you saw it gradually increase its powers, particularly in line with the successive treaties. What view do you take of the role of Parliament and of that expansion in its powers?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, yes, each treaty saw the European Parliament move forward. I am glad it did. It cannot be denied that, in the history of European integration, Parliament has been the institution which has been the slowest to take off and which, from the outset — as is perhaps natural since the initiative at the outset can only come from the Member States — has not had that democratic dimension which it needs. And I am very glad that Parliament is nowadays acquiring a presence, a power and an ability to make proposals, which is important and a move in the right direction. What I think is needed is for us to contrive to strike the right balance, which cannot be copied from the balances which exist in one or other of our countries. Transposing a constitutional system or a political system from one of our countries to the European level is impossible and is not desirable. We have to find a specifically European balance: co-decision, for example, is something which would be unthinkable at the national level in France. We still live under the grip of Montesquieu and the separation of powers. And a lot of members of parliament here do not even know what co-decision is. What I mean is that co-decision is something completely unthinkable, whereas at the European level co-decision is practised in a fairly natural way. So we have to invent a kind of European political power for the specifically European institutions, and a commission. It is absolutely vital in European integration. It's not entirely clear what use that would be in any given EU country. So when we look at the balance of powers in Europe, we realise that there is still a margin for giving Parliament more power. On condition, though, that we still strictly follow the line of acknowledging that power is held first and foremost by the Presidency of the European Council. Hence the need for the presidency to be longer lasting and not rotate every six months.



#### 4. The French Senate and European issues

**[Frédéric Clavert]** You became a Senator in 2007. In the Senate, you were a member of the delegation for the European Union. What is the role of that delegation, firstly? Secondly, in a more general way, what place do European questions occupy in the proceedings of the Senate?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, that delegation has actually changed name since the very recent reform of the constitution, and it has become a fully functioning committee. With just one thing to distinguish it from the others, which is that one can be a member of that committee and at the same time a member of another. I personally am a member of the Finance Committee at the same time as being a member of the European Affairs Committee. I think there is more to it than just a change of title, and I personally would very much like (and the chairman, Hubert Haenel, agrees with me), I would very much like there to be a change, a thorough overhaul of that committee. Until now, the delegation's task has mainly been to consider draft European directives and regulations and give an opinion. As you know, that is part of the mandatory procedure. The Commission sends its drafts to all the parliaments in Europe, all the assemblies, and they have to give their opinion. And the bulk of our work has actually consisted of that procedure. We also take part, of course, in the discussions on European affairs which take place here in the Senate just before each European Council, just as the State Secretary for European Affairs invites us to a debriefing session after each of those Councils. I would also add that we are very regularly briefed by several ministers, particularly the Minister for Agriculture, on everything he does at the European level. But I think that now that the delegation is becoming a committee (a real, fully-fledged Senate committee), it will have to concern itself with, and even pre-empt, all questions involving Europe, not just the ones referred to us by the Commission. And I am among those who think (and we are in fact going to have a seminar on this), I am one of those who think it is important that this committee should look ahead to developments in Europe and concern itself with all the questions, even those which may actually be dealt with elsewhere. I was saying to you a moment ago that I was a Member of the European Affairs Committee. We are obviously, at the moment, giving detailed study to the factors in the financial crisis and the economic crisis now raging. And there is an aspect of it which is necessarily European. I must say I find that the Senate's traditional committees concern themselves very little with the European aspects, which is a further reason for the committee which specialises in those matters to take them on. What I would like, for instance, is for this European Affairs Committee to study the way the ECB has been behaving, for us to study how Europe could behave towards the G20, for us also to look into the reasons why we have failed to put together a proper economic revival plan at the European level. So I think this committee's job now is to really get off the ground, take off, and become a very, very important committee within the Senate.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** French parliamentarians sometimes accuse the French government, possibly, but also the European institutions of keeping them somewhat out of the decision-making process. Would this reform of the committee which you would like to see happening be a way of responding to that accusation?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, the constitutional reform is certainly going to give Parliament more power in all fields. And the President of the Republic's intention was indeed to restore a certain balance and make sure that the members of the French Parliament have more power than they had under the Fifth Republic. Europe, thank God, is not going to be left out of that repositioning. I think that we are now actually going to have a much more important part to play. As always, power is there, but you have to take it. We members of that European Affairs Committee therefore need to take the steps needed to really build our power, including in this institution. Because I feel that Europe is not making itself properly felt, and at the same time, even when it does, it is not necessarily inside the European Affairs Committee.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Reading up on the debates where you spoke, one notices that you were interested in the

Galileo project. Why do you think that kind of project is important for the European Union, and should there be other projects of that type?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Yes, I did take an interest in the Galileo project because, as you noticed, it is a project which was very important and which was dragging on. The financial arrangements delayed the development of Galileo considerably. Anyway, we had the feeling, when I asked the question, that things were not yet certain and we were some way from an agreement, whereas the United States was into its third generation of GPS systems and China and Russia were setting up their own systems. So I thought it was important that Europe should equip itself with Galileo both for its own independence and at the same time from the point of view of industry ... and of employment, as Galileo is expected to create 100 000 jobs. So it got to a point where it seemed to me that it was important for people in Brussels to sense that the members of parliament were interested in that issue and were very pro-active. Well, everything turned out well, as it happened, because in the end — under the auspices of Jacques Barrot — in the end we worked out an approach which got us out of the crisis, since Galileo now seems to be on the right track. But it seemed to me important to do it. Well, there are certainly other fields where the efforts being put into Galileo could be carried across. One that comes to mind is telemedicine. I have something of an interest in that question. I think it is a promising field for the future, and we could certainly go further. I remember a time when European-level research was a much greater concern than it is now. I remember the EUREKA programme, for instance, and I don't know if it is because we talk about it less or do less but the fact remains that one of the solutions to our current crisis is for us to put in an extra effort as regards research. I do think that, from the European point of view, it would be in our interest, there too, to bring our viewpoints closer together, to do a little to overcome the tendency towards national egotism we all have, and to give fresh impetus to European research. Nowadays there seems to be such a shortage of credit that none of our countries is capable of generating sufficient research efforts to produce significant results in any very serious way. So there has never been a greater need for the European Union when it comes to research.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** Still looking at those same debates in the Senate, you are a member of the Budget Committee. You were State Secretary for the Budget in the 1970s. So the budget is very obviously a subject close to your heart. You refer to the concept of flexicurity, you regret the increase in the deficit and general government debt in France. When it comes to France's position in the European Union, how important is its economic and budgetary policy?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Now that's a huge question and a very important question. And a difficult one too. I would say that I don't think we can have exactly the same attitude towards the budget deficit nowadays as we could only a year ago. When I arrived here, in the Senate, one of the first speeches I gave, in fact, was in the context of the debate on the finance law, about the budget deficit. We are a country which, taking all political persuasions together, has not managed to present a balanced budget for more than 25 years. This seems very serious to me and a creeping tendency which absolutely could and certainly should be condemned, because we are going to shift the burden of the prosperity we allow ourselves to enjoy today onto future generations. We are going to shift the burden onto our children and grandchildren. Secondly, I also think it's serious because I put myself in the position of our European partners, and if we do not abide by the Maastricht criteria, in other words if we do not participate in joint efforts in the same way as others, and if we share in the solidarity without contributing anything of merit, the time will come when things will stop working. So that is more or less what I said when a deficit of 40 billion was announced. In the end, at the end of the financial year, the deficit was not 40 billion, it was more than 50 billion, and now we are up to 100 billion. But in the meantime, of course, there has been the financial crisis. That obviously doesn't absolve us of everything, but I think it is vital that each of our countries launches a plan for economic revival, as we are unable to launch one at the European level. So I am not necessarily especially critical of the deficit this year, as it has happened at a really exceptional, really serious time when we have to save as many jobs as possible. So I am putting the budgetary policy in the crisis years rather to one side, so to speak,

though we must nevertheless remain aware that that budgetary policy of the crisis years came on top of some degree of laxity previously, for more than 25 years, and that is going to cause us problems as we emerge from the crisis. That's obvious. It will cause problems all round, but especially for those who have been piling up plans for post-crisis revival on a nest-egg of deficit. So it is a matter of serious concern, grave concern, to me — and one that I think I share with many others. And we must always, in our crisis-busting policies, try to find the very narrow path which will enable us to limit the damage done by the crisis and, at the same time, will not be a complete burden on the future.

## 5. Future prospects of the European Union

**[Frédéric Clavert]** You were an MEP at the time of the French referendum on the Maastricht Treaty. Were you in favour of a referendum, and what lessons did you draw from the referendum campaign and results?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** No, I was not in favour of the Maastricht referendum. I happened to be at a reception at the Élysée where I met President Jacques Chirac and I regret not having said so to him. I don't think he would have changed his mind if I had, but I think referendums on European issues ought to be avoided. Why? Because, at any rate in our country, in France, that's how it is, people don't answer questions put to them in referendums. A European referendum is an opportunity for the French to say what they think about something quite different and, generally speaking, to criticise national policy or the policy of whoever offers them the referendum, rather than to vote on the European question. Besides, it is after all fairly complicated for ordinary citizens to study the text put before them, form an opinion on it and genuinely come to a decision in full knowledge of the facts. We have representative democracies in our countries for a good reason. I think European affairs are better dealt with by members of parliament than by the citizens. There is nothing objectionable about what I've just said, because democracy means referendums for certain things but it also means the exercise of parliamentary power. I think, on the other hand, that it would be better, every five years, for example, to ask the citizens a very simple question, which could be asked in every European country on the same day, on the lines of: 'Are you in favour of continuing with the building of a united Europe?' Full stop. It would then be clear that the answer would be 'yes' or 'no' and that would make it possible to continue. In particular, that would give every citizen an awareness of Europe and a chance to show willingness to think about the process. But to ask Europe's citizens to take a decision on a 500-page document ... I think that's the role of representative democracy, not of a referendum.

**[Frédéric Clavert]** The European constitutional treaty was rejected in 2005. It may perhaps be replaced by the Lisbon Treaty. What is the immediate future for the European Union, and the more distant future?

**[Pierre Bernard-Reymond]** Well, I really hope we will be able to ratify that treaty. I think that institutional problems are important for the integration of Europe and for the effectiveness of the European Union in particular. I think that a presidency which holds office for at least two years is absolutely vital. And I very much hope that the Irish and the Czechs will let us implement that treaty very quickly, both because the institutions are a key element in European integration, and at the same time because, as long as it isn't settled, it casts a shadow over all the other issues we also have to settle. So when we have institutions which can function effectively for a decent length of time, perhaps not for good, but for a decent length of time, then we will no longer have any excuse for not tackling the practical, real problems, which is being done already but not enough, and we will be able to make sure that Europe goes on deepening the solidarity between its members, developing its research and playing its part in international competition. So I think the institutions are in a way a prior condition for the development of the European Union. Now what might that development involve? Some further enlargements, certainly. There are still countries quite naturally, quite legitimately knocking at the door. They will have to comply with the *acquis communautaire*, as has always

been the case. They will have to meet the criteria both for joining the euro and the criteria for, I would say, democracy, etc. Obviously, the more Europe expands, the more it will change. And we will have to try to strike a fair balance between efficiency and enlargement. It's an old problem: deepening and widening, it isn't a new issue. All in all, I think that to have gone from six to 27 Member States and, I was going to say, still to exist in the way we do exist is actually quite a feat and we should be satisfied to have achieved it. Anyone who, when there were six of us, at the time of the Common Market, anyone who had imagined that we could still be here (and as efficient as we are) with 27 members would certainly have been immediately disowned by everybody. So, all in all, I draw a very positive lesson from what has happened. It's the first time in the history of the world that a continent has been organised on the political level, in peace, voluntarily and in a context of democracy. This makes it unique in the history of mankind and we need to be aware of it. So we must push on, we must continue. We know very well that anyone who doesn't move forward falls behind, so we must also use our imaginations, we must always be mindful of how things can slide. We must not be in too much of a hurry, either, unfortunately: the scale we are working on is from one generation to another, we are working on a scale of centuries. So I think that when we look at things from that angle, we can really be very happy at what has happened since the declaration by Robert Schuman. And I don't think that today we can draw a picture of what Europe will be like in 20 years' time. Everything is very evolutionary, everything is very fluid. Europe is not alone in the world. It must be aware of the changes occurring on a worldwide scale, of the global context and, I would say, of the two major challenges we have before us, the environmental challenge and the challenge of a new economy, the challenge of responding to the financial and economic crisis. To my way of thinking, these are two substantial challenges, but I think that Europe has enough of an intellectual legacy, a cultural legacy, enough of a capacity for imagination, a capacity for invention, to be among those who, in a worldwide dialogue, can bring something fundamental to the way our planet evolves. I am relying very heavily — without too much wishful thinking — on the G20, but also, first and foremost, on the idea that we must press on with organising our planet. And we must give the International Monetary Fund more power. We must argue for a degree of regionalisation of the UN, but also for the UN to have more power. I think there are huge numbers of things for Europe to do and to propose in terms of a way of organising the world which allows for civilising, counterbalancing and humanising the kind of globalisation we have experienced so far, with all its exaggerations, its mistakes that we are particularly suffering from at this time of crisis.