

27/12/2023

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# An architect of a united Europe

## A life of commitment



The teams of the Jacques Delors Institutes in Paris, Berlin and Brussels have just heard with great sadness that the man whose work they support with pride, synonymous with a Europe of unity and solidarity, passed away on December 27th 2023. They would like to express their deepest condolences to his daughter and granddaughter and to his entire family, who were so very dear to him.

With them, Europe in its entirety will grieve the passing of one of its greatest architects. The European Union is losing its “honorary citizen”, an honour Jacques Delors shares with Jean Monnet and Helmut Kohl, who he helped to achieve German reunification. The Single Market, the Euro, Schengen, enlargements and Erasmus, in addition to cohesion funds, social dialogue and aid for the most disadvantaged: the greatest achievements of European integration are deeply intertwined with the foresight, courage, convictions, perseverance and unrelenting efforts which distinguished Jacques Delors’ actions during his ten years at the helm of the European Commission. This action was rolled out according to his three-pronged approach: “Competition that stimulates, cooperation that strengthens, and solidarity that unites”.

His achievements are based on European convictions shaped by these words by Hannah Arendt which he liked to repeat: “Forgiving and promising”, the conditions to work together on our continent. He always kept abreast of progress in the project for a united Europe, worried about its mistakes, lamenting its departures but tirelessly hoping for a revival that he deemed more necessary now than ever before.

In addition to his historic contribution to European construction in line with the founding fathers, Jacques Delors made political commitment a noble pursuit. As a Member of the European Parliament elected in 1979, then as French Minister of the Economy and Finance at the start of François Mitterrand’s first five-year term (and, more briefly, as Mayor of Clichy), he was an active and dedicated public servant, unfailingly demonstrating his commitment. In declining to run for President of France in the 1995 elections, he affirmed his freedom from power and the exacting way in which he considered its exercise.

In his actions for associations, trade unions, the CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labour) and politics, particularly within the Socialist Party, this activist, as he humbly liked to call himself, remained faithful and driven by the personalist ideal. A man of faith, he saw each person as a unique being within a network of social relationships and believed in the commitment to society to convey this ideal in which each person does their share for the common good. The “social engineer” is a model of collective action, cooperation and collegiality, principles that he adopted extensively. Also mindful of educational needs, his name is also linked to lifelong learning, which he initiated in France with the 1971 law that bears his name.

To this great man that we have had the honour to serve and know, whose warm heart and cool head have touched and inspired us, we wish not only to express our deep gratitude but also affirm our commitment to take the responsibility of his political heritage with dignity and to continue his European action to unite Europeans.

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