

The EP call for a political Union

The politically correct line was to push forward and complete the internal market by creating economic and monetary union. Monetary union was to come first and would lead to economic union towards the turn of the century, and then we would discuss political union. This, you could say, was more or less the timetable we were working with.

And the outcome was that the fall of the wall put political union on the table in a very direct way. And I think that from the outset the European Parliament's attitude – which was very proactive, and was already apparent in the ten-point proposal I presented in Strasbourg – not only allowed us to act as a sounding board for the first time, amplifying opinions and support, but also enabled us to participate as key players. We suggested to the Council that we should meet regularly to develop and discuss ideas together. And since it was a period of such radical change, for the first time, the Council accepted.

Co-decision was an essential point, another was citizenship, European citizenship and not just a European currency — I described this graphically as a merger between the stock market and life — and then, the third and key factor, which was developed over many years through successive treaties, was parliament's involvement in the investiture of the Commission President.

The EP dialogue with the National Parliaments

The other very useful development was the first conference with national parliaments, some of which were very active, and it also proved very useful when it came to creating consensus between us. We suggested the conference because we believed that the moment demanded it.

I would say that we were riding a wave of strong agreement, and when you look at the resolution we adopted after three days of debate, almost everything in the Maastricht Treaty and many things which later appeared in the Constitutional Treaty and in the Lisbon Treaty can be found there in embryonic form. In other words, it was not a mere exchange of views or a debate; we also agreed on the broad outlines, which I believe played an important role in stirring governments to action and in creating an unprecedented historic movement towards a united stance in Europe.

Naturally, there were some reservations, but I would say that when you include, for example, the outcome of the vote at Montecitorio, unless I am mistaken, the final resolution was supported by almost three quarters of the Assembly, which was ground-breaking because, moreover, we were not seated in delegations, but in fact by our political families.