

Jacques Delors

Architect of the modern European Union

SUMMARY

The consensus among most historians of European integration and political scientists is that Jacques Delors, who served as President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995, was the most successful holder of that post to date. His agenda and accomplishments include the EU single market, the Single European Act, Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the rapid integration of the former German Democratic Republic into the European Community. His combination of coherent agenda-setting and strong negotiating skills, acquired through long experience of trade union bargaining and years of ministerial responsibilities in turbulent times, puts Delors above other Commission Presidents, whether in terms of institutional innovation or the development of new Europe-wide policies. He also showed himself able to react swiftly to external events, notably the collapse of the Soviet bloc, whilst building Europe's credibility on the international stage.

This Briefing records Delors' life across its crucial stages, from trade union activist, senior civil servant, French politician, and Member of the European Parliament, to the helm of the European Commission, where he left the greatest individual impact on European integration history to date. It also traces the most important ideas that guided Delors in his national and European roles. Finally, it describes the political events and key actors which made Delors' decade in office a time of important decisions and progress in the process of European integration and, in doing so, it draws on recent academic literature and on speeches Delors gave in the European Parliament.



Jacques Delors in the European Parliament, January 1985.

In this Briefing:

- > 'Tell people that Europe is a wonderful place'
- > An unusual Parisian mandarin
- > Activist, civil servant and teacher
- > A parliamentary interlude
- > Leader of an extraordinary decade of European integration
- > Removing frontiers within Europe
- > Engineering Social Europe
- > The legacy of Delors' European leadership

'Tell people that Europe is a wonderful place'

In January 1985, Jacques Delors became the eighth President of the European Commission of the then European Community (EC). This was 30 years after Jean Monnet, the first President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) – the predecessor of the EC and today's European Union (EU) – resigned from office. While Monnet is often considered the determining force behind the birth of the EU, Delors can reasonably be termed the architect of the structure and character of today's Union.

In his first speech to the European Parliament, following the swearing-in of the new College of Commissioners, Delors recalled Monnet's words from the birth of the ECSC – that European integration is not only a political concept, but an ideal, with the aim of securing peace in Europe. In fact, Delors recognised the notion of peace as the fundamental *raison d'être* of the Community. As Commission President, Delors contributed to the realisation of peace in Europe by promoting a prosperous continent which soon became a more united one.

Delors is widely held to be the best example of a successful President of the European Commission. He convinced the Member States to launch a process of completing the single market by 1992, and to sign the Single European Act which underpinned it. He pushed successfully for European Monetary Union and he supported the rapid integration of the former German Democratic Republic into the EC. Coherent agenda-setting, a tremendous amount of hard, focused work and strong negotiation skills, acquired through years of trade union bargaining and ministerial responsibilities in turbulent times, put him above most other Commission presidents in terms of influence and strategic intelligence. External events, such as the collapse of the Soviet bloc, showed him to be a nimble operator beyond the immediate field of EU competences.

No previous Commission President before Delors had attracted such considerable public attention for the Commission's work. He had particularly strong relations with the academic world, based on a mutual interest in the theoretical concepts underpinning European integration, most famously 'neo-functionalist' ideas. The volume of press coverage, research articles and monographs on Delors' Commission presidency, both during and after his term in office, is significant. He used this high degree of media and academic interest to shape and push forward his political agenda and to reach out to European citizens to tell them that 'Europe is a wonderful place'.

An unusual Parisian mandarin

Jacques Delors was born in Paris on 20 July 1925. His parents lived in a street quite close to the highly symbolic Place de la Bastille. One grandfather was a farmer in the Corrèze, a central region from which a great number of French political leaders have made their way to Paris. Politically, his father, an usher and messenger at the Banque de France, shared socialist principles with his brothers and other members of the family, some of whom sympathised with the *Parti communiste français* (PCF). Having been wounded during the First World War, his father was also a convinced pacifist. The election of the *Front populaire* government in 1936 was an event greeted by the Delors family and their friends with great enthusiasm. Although Delors called himself a socialist during much of his adult life, he only joined the *Parti socialiste* (PS) quite late, in 1974. In the many interviews he gave once he had become a public figure, he made it clear that, despite his left-leaning political views, he was never a Marxist, but preferred social and political reform to any revolutionary aspirations.

Delors' education was greatly disrupted by the Second World War. His family was obliged to move between cities frequently, meaning that he had to change school several times. Half-jokingly, as Commission President, he later mentioned this as one reason why he never learned to speak German well. However, he was the only student from his class who went on to a *lycée* (secondary school preparation for university studies). He nevertheless remained in touch with many of his friends through membership in the *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* (JOC), another important influence on his personal philosophy. As he approached his final examinations, he entertained

several ideas on the future direction of his studies and professional career, such as journalism, the film industry or fashion design.

Shortly after taking up a place at the Université de Strasbourg, located in Clermont-Ferrand during the German occupation, Delors was briefly detained by the police. He subsequently decided to avoid university until the liberation of Paris, because he feared he would be sent abroad as a forced labourer. When the family moved back to Paris in October 1944, he followed, somewhat grudgingly, his father's wish that he should work for the Banque de France. Starting with an internship, he passed the entry examination for the bank's executive stream and then continued as an official. He quickly became known for his strong analytical skills and ability to rapidly acquire technical expertise. In parallel, he studied banking at the Institut d'études politiques de Paris (Sciences Po) in the evenings. Obtaining excellent results in the final examination, the bank posted Delors to the private office of the *Directeur général des titres et du marché monétaire*, in 1950.

Activist, civil servant and teacher

For a few years after the end of German occupation, the *Mouvement républicain populaire* (MRP), a party whose ideology was close to Christian Democracy in countries such as Germany and Italy, made a major impact on French political life. Robert Schuman and Pierre Pflimlin were important party members. At its heyday, the party held almost a quarter of the seats in the *Assemblée nationale*. Delors was active in the MRP for a couple of months, but, wishing to deepen both his political experience and religious knowledge, and to find a common endeavour for his wife and himself, he joined the Catholic organisation, *Vie nouvelle*, as well as the Catholic trade union CFTC, the precursor of today's CFDT (*Confédération française démocratique du travail*). The latter was founded in 1964 and is currently the largest French union, with around 800 000 members. Delors engaged actively in this transformation, due to his conviction that Catholicism should not be a condition for trade union work. Between 1953 and 1960, he was a member of a youth party that later became part of the *Parti socialiste*. In 1959, the CFTC asked Delors to work in the investment and economic planning section of the *Conseil économique et social*, an advisory body to the French government, aiming to establish stronger cooperative links between employers and workers. Delors' formal union activities came to an end when he was asked, in 1962, to head the unit for social affairs of the *Commissariat général du plan*, the central government agency for economic planning.

After the tumultuous events of May 1968, the Gaullist government warmed to Delors' ideas of social dialogue and negotiation. Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas appointed him as an adviser for social affairs in his cabinet in 1969, where he immediately started, with Chaban-Delmas' support, to prepare a system of contractual agreements in preparation for subsequent social and economic legislation (known in France as *politique contractuelle*). During his three years on Chaban-Delmas' staff, Delors was in contact with ministers from other EC Member States and became well acquainted with parliamentarians of all political colours, including the leading socialist, François Mitterrand. Mitterrand had previously asked Delors to serve as minister in the shadow government he created after his defeat to de Gaulle in the 1965 election. Looking for a wide-ranging coalition of the left, his idea was to have a prominent representative of the Christian left in his team. In May 1974, both Mitterrand (between the two rounds of the election) and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing approached him with requests to join their governments, but Delors declined both offers. After the historic Congrès d'Épinay in June 1971, which opened *Parti socialiste* membership to trade union representatives and Christians, Delors finally joined the PS in November 1974. Some members of the party leadership first resisted his candidacy, in view of his previous association with a Gaullist prime minister. As Delors has often joked, he was considered to be on the left by Gaullists and on the right by many socialists.

After Giscard d'Estaing's election as French President in 1974, Delors concentrated on research and teaching for several years, taking up a post as Associate Professor of Management at the Université Paris-Dauphine. He continued to be very active in political associations and clubs, in particular *Échange et projets*, which he co-founded in 1973. This group discussed and published on a wide variety of social

and political issues. Critical observations about the stagnation of the European Community, and in particular the Commission's lack of energy, were a regular feature of its statements.

A parliamentary interlude

Jacques Delors often hesitated to run for electoral office. In France, his only purely domestic electoral mandate was as mayor of Clichy, for two years, just before being chosen to head the Commission. He probably suspected that his ideological profile, spanning both sides of the political spectrum, would make it hard to respect party lines and to campaign successfully. In any case, the PS did not really press him to volunteer to be a candidate, although Mitterrand occasionally suggested that he should increase his political weight through direct exposure to the electorate. When the first direct elections to the European Parliament approached, however, Delors had difficulty in refusing his party's request to run in this totally new electoral contest. Nevertheless, even then, Delors was only given 21st position on the party list, with the higher ranks reserved for long-standing and loyal party activists. To his own surprise, the French Socialists obtained a very high vote and Delors was elected a Member of the European Parliament in May 1979.

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament immediately chose Delors to take the chair of the important Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee. Apart from his successor, Jacques Santer (Luxembourg), he is the only Commission President to date with experience as a European parliamentarian. As Commission President, Delors therefore understood the Parliament's importance from the start, as a platform for preparing and explaining his policy initiatives and as an ally to tackle any resistance from recalcitrant Member States.

Due to his role as a committee chair, the number of parliamentary reports that bear Delors' name is small, but he regularly intervened in plenary debates on a wide range of issues, including the crucial importance of monetary cooperation for frontier workers, the New Community Instrument for borrowing and lending, allowing the EC to underwrite loans in cooperation with the European Investment Bank, the crisis in the iron and steel industry, and the European cooperative movement. Being in the chair required that he ensure the smooth day-to-day operation of the committee, steering numerous legislative opinions and writing letters to other key parliamentary figures. However, some of Delors' speeches in the plenary enabled him to express his political orientation more generally, such as when he offered his own definition of socialism, in January 1980, quoting former Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme's statement that 'society must be hard on the strong, but gentler and more understanding for the weak'.



Member of Parliament: Jacques Delors speaking in a plenary debate in Strasbourg in 1979.

François Mitterrand's victory in the 1981 presidential elections represented a major reversal in French politics. Delors was invited to become Minister of Finance in the government of Socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy and so left the European Parliament. His tenure was turbulent, with a series of international currency crises and the permanent weakness of the French franc, requiring

daily emergency management. Delors consistently tried to avoid the devaluation of the franc and insisted on the importance of balancing the progressive economic policies that were at the heart of the promises made during Mitterrand's electoral campaign, with the effective control of public debt and inflation. He was often attacked by the left wing of the PS for his 'austerity' policies and for de facto adopting the German economic model. It is true to say that, even after the entry into office of Helmut Kohl's *Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (CDU) in 1982, Delors saw many aspects of that country's economic policy-making system – such as the German model of co-determination in the coal and steel industry, the role of trade unions in wage negotiations and the importance of competitiveness at a global level – as a realisation of his own concept of *politique contractuelle*.

At the end of Gaston Thorn's mandate as Commission President (1981 to 1984), most national leaders expected the German government to try to claim the next presidency. Indeed, Chancellor Kohl did suggest Kurt Biedenkopf of the CDU as a candidate, while signalling at the same time that his government would be ready to accept a French candidate 'if his initials were JD'. In parallel, Mitterrand's own original preference, Claude Cheysson, was unable to build consensus among Member-State leaders, despite (or because of) his eight years of previous experience as Commissioner. Delors' appointment was, therefore, a combination of personal appreciation by other leaders and his international reputation – although being a self-proclaimed socialist – as a pragmatic economic policy-maker and expert in financial and monetary affairs. The European Council appointed Delors as President of the European Commission from 1 January 1985.

Leader of an extraordinary decade of European integration

The decade spanning the years 1985 to 1995, during which Delors presided over the Commission, experienced crucial historic events in Europe, including the end of the Cold War, German reunification, and the Yugoslav wars. Likewise, this decade marked crucial changes in the process of European integration. For example, the EC's membership grew substantially: Portugal and Spain joined in 1986, while Austria, Finland and Sweden became Member States in 1995. Furthermore, the Community underwent a substantial institutional transformation. The 1986 Single European Act was the first major revision of the founding Treaty of Rome (from 1957), and it reformed legislative procedures by extending qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers to new policy areas, notably the single market, and giving the European Parliament its first real taste of legislative power, through the 'cooperation procedure'. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty not only created the three pillar system, it also introduced EMU, and the 'co-decision procedure' between Parliament and the Council, and integrated the EC, as one of the three pillars, into the new European Union (EU). Delors did not particularly like the new name 'Union', preferring 'Community' due to his strong attachment to the notion of the 'Community method' of decision-making. Nevertheless, as historian Piers Ludlow has emphasised, Delors was very much seen as one of the architects – if not the architect – of this extraordinary decade of European integration which so decisively defined today's EU.

Playing a crucial role in shaping the Single European Act was a first success for Delors as Commission President with regard to institutional change. In addition, his 1987 proposals for reforming the Community budget, accepted by the European Council in 1988, were in themselves an institutional revolution and a further success. The 'Delors I' package modified the budgetary procedure by instituting the practice of having five-year financial frameworks, rather than just an annual budget. Moreover, the 'Delors I' package increased the income from EC own resources and doubled the cohesion policy budget for EC structural funds under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Redistributive aspects of European integration, such as the ERDF, were an important theme throughout Delors' Commission presidency. The introduction of a multiannual budget and the increase in the Community's spending, especially for the ERDF, was also in part a response to European Parliament demands.

Delors was interested in establishing constructive cooperation with the European Parliament, which had gained formal influence in law-making through the introduction of the cooperation procedure in the Single European Act. Presenting the political agenda for his mandate to the Parliament's plenary session of January 1985, just after taking office as Commission President, was something previous Commission Presidents had not done. The Parliament thus acknowledged this unusual move as a cooperative gesture. The strengthened Community budget, with its new multiannual framework based on Delors' proposal, helped to build further trust between Delors and the Parliament. Budgetary powers had hitherto been the Parliament's most potent weapon in its battle for greater influence, often using the ability to block the annual Community budget.

Delors' guiding principles

In his early professional life, up to the 1970s, Jacques Delors quite uniquely combined union activism, public service and religious engagement. A guide in these different fields of activity was his belief that **social dialogue** was one of the crucial instruments of effective and equitable economic reform – hence his respect for Nordic, Dutch and German social democracy, with their cooperative relationships between managers, union representatives and political leaders. During the 1960s he had deepened his knowledge of these varieties of social democracy by visiting Scandinavian countries and writing about his impressions and conclusions in French trade union publications. He kept this emphasis on the involvement of social partners alive, both as a Member of the European Parliament and, later, as Commission President.

'Delorism', as his distinctive position on the ideological spectrum was sometimes called, can be defined as a combination of normative principles and working methods. Delors was strongly influenced by Emmanuel Mounier, representing the French version of **personalism**, a school of thought elaborating the idea that the individual human being should be the principal subject of philosophical study, although including and supporting integration in a community of fellow beings. Personalism was often seen by its proponents as a third way between individualistic capitalism and collectivised socialism. Important EU founding fathers such as Robert Schuman were influenced by it. From a personalist perspective, the subsidiarity principle that gained increasing importance during Delors' terms as Commission President was more than a legal implementation of the importance of the freedom and autonomy of individuals. It also stressed the need to strengthen local communities, regional bodies and Member States. Personally, Delors favoured the principle of proportionality over subsidiarity because he thought that it better served as a guide for sharing sovereignty between the levels and spheres of European governance.

The third influence on Delors' world view, **federalism**, developed over a long period but became more prevalent during his time as Commission President and later, when he founded the think-tank, *Notre Europe*. On some occasions he mentioned the work of Swiss federalist Denis de Rougemont as an important inspiration for his own views on European integration. While Delors acknowledges the 'eternal' nature of nations, he is at the same time convinced that Europe can only defend its interests and play an active role in globalisation if it is ready to execute transnational policies in a federalist framework. Delors is famous for the seemingly contradictory concept of a 'federation of nation states', which he developed by perusing a large volume of legal and constitutionalist scholarship. With great simplification, the core of the concept may be described as the appropriate attribution of selected powers and competences to different levels of authority, according to the specific requirements of achieving effective joint public policy decisions. In this concept, Delors accepts and expresses the reality of two potentially conflicting needs: providing Europe with an emotional identity (he sometimes speaks of 'giving Europe a soul') and guaranteeing its Member States their culture and traditions. He often summarised his federalist approach by insisting that leaders 'provide the Community with the means matching its ambitions'.

More generally, Delors sought the Parliament's support for his far-reaching plans for the future evolution of the Community. As he explained in his January 1990 speech to the Parliament, 'the Single Act is an indivisible whole. [...] It implies the creation of a single economic and social area'.

Importantly, Delors succeeded in building a very constructive partnership with the European Council. He established solid personal ties with some of the major Heads of State or Government. For example, although his relationship with Mitterrand was never particularly close personally, it could be highly effective politically; that with the Prime Minister of Spain, Felipe González, was close;

and relations with Margaret Thatcher only became really difficult in the British Prime Minister's latter years in power, after he gave his (in)famous September 1988 speech to the British Trades Union Congress in Bournemouth, outlining his ideas for a social Europe, using the signature remark that 'nobody can fall in love with a common market'. His relationship with the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, became very warm, notably after Delors welcomed and supported German reunification. Bilateral dinners at *Chez René* in Paris or *Maison Kammerzell* in Strasbourg were sometimes described as 'gargantuan feasts'. German Foreign Secretary Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Delors also had many views in common and collaborated effectively.

These friendships, as well as his acceptance as a full member of the European Council, were pivotal on many occasions and helped Delors to carry forward his political agenda. Although he compared his accent to that of Maurice Chevalier, the well-known French actor, cabaret singer and entertainer, he communicated effectively in English. Moreover, his comprehensive expertise in the details of European policy, acquired through enormous discipline, made him a crucial resource on which Heads of State or Government in the European Council could rely. In turn, this gave Delors power and influence in the Community's policy- and decision-making process.



Delors during the official visit of Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic, Lothar de Maizière, and Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Kohl, to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 1990 (with EP President Enrique Barón Crespo and Taoiseach Charles Haughey, President-in-office of the Council).

Removing frontiers within Europe

Besides institutional reform and expansion of membership, the EC's policy agenda saw extraordinary advances in the decade of the Delors Commission. After the destabilisation of currencies and the decline of economic growth in the 1970s, the top priority on Delors' policy agenda during his first mandate was deepening the integration of the two closely connected fields of economic and monetary policy, by implementing EMU. In other words, preparing the policy ground for the creation of a single European currency and the convergence of the Member States' economies defined Delors' early Commission work programme. In the first phase, Delors focused his Commission on the creation and completion of the EC single market, by abolishing most frontiers within Europe and cracking down on multiple non-tariff barriers, with the aim of establishing a true European internal market.

In his speech to the European Parliament in January 1985, Delors already set out his ideas for completing the single market. He addressed Members with a rhetorical question: whether 'it may not be over-optimistic to announce a decision to eliminate all frontiers within Europe by 1992 and to implement it?' Determining a deadline for the completion of the single market was an important innovation, immediately capturing public attention, keeping the issue at the top of the EC agenda and accelerating the policy- and law-making process. Delors' ambitious programme, encompassing the

free movement of persons, goods, services and capital inside the EC, was quickly formalised in a European Commission White Paper, the 1985 'White Paper on Completing the Single Market'. It listed 300 legislative measures to eliminate physical, technical and fiscal non-tariff barriers between the Member States, each with detailed and staged timetables for legislation and implementation by 1992.

Even though Delors was not the originator of the idea, sometimes attributed to the Dutch diplomat Max Kohnstamm, of defining a deadline for completing the single market, he sensed that this project was likely to gather support from all Member States. Indeed, the idea of completing the single market had been discussed in Brussels for several years before Delors took office as Commission President. For example, a European Parliament intergroup called the Kangaroo Group, a cross-party network of Members and other actors founded in the early 1980s, had lobbied heavily for the removal of borders within the Community to boost trade between the Member States. The European Roundtable of Industrialists made similar proposals. At first not certain whether it was the 'grand idea' he sought to give impetus for European integration, Delors then saw the single market programme as a win-win proposal for Member States, which would allow them to reap joint gains by triggering economic growth.

Delors' idea of appointing Arthur Cockfield, Margaret Thatcher's nominee, as Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services, with responsibility for the single market, turned out to be an inspired move. Cockfield was totally committed to the single market programme and helped to build trust and communication bridges to Thatcher, who – out of all the available policy ideas for relaunching European integration – could probably only easily have accepted the single market. The subsequent focus on the single market programme, a major success for Delors in his first years as Commission President, resulted in a number of important texts being swiftly adopted, including the third directive on the liberalisation of capital movements. Moreover, Delors' choice of the single market programme for removing all barriers to Europe's internal trade helped to restore the EC's image as a dynamic force.

Like the single market programme, EMU had long been discussed in Brussels. For example, the Werner Plan from 1970, drawn up by a working group chaired by the Luxembourg Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Pierre Werner, had proposed the installation of a system for the irrevocable fixing of exchange rates and the adoption of a single currency. The excellent team that Delors had installed around himself, headed by his powerful and effective *chef de cabinet*, Pascal Lamy, had inserted some key words on EMU in the Single European Act. As a reaction to both this and to dissatisfaction with the existing European Monetary System (an arrangement to link their currencies between the Member States, dating back to 1979), the European Council meeting in Hannover in June 1988 decided to set up a committee to study and propose concrete stages leading to EMU, to be chaired by Delors.

This committee, mainly comprising the governors of EC central banks, rapidly became known as the 'Delors Committee'. As political scientist Amy Verdun has described, from the outset Delors was centrally involved in the committee's work. The committee fulfilled its mandate by launching a report in April 1989, suggesting three stages for achieving EMU and for further monetary and economic integration. The Delors Report set out a blueprint for EMU that was incorporated, with some modest changes, in the Maastricht Treaty. As one of the main architects of EMU – introducing a single currency – Delors created a strong symbol of European integration, visible to European citizens on a daily basis.

Several commentators make a clear distinction between Delors' first European Commission mandate, ushering in the above steps towards a more integrated Europe, and his second, where Delors' dynamism began to antagonise several members of the European Council. It was felt that a significant Treaty revision, enlargement to the south and the expansion and transformation of the EC budget were sufficient modernisation for years to come. However, Delors was already planning subsequent reforms, which were in his view logical and necessary follow-up decisions to previous achievements. When re-elected Commission President, his speech to the European Parliament of 17 January 1990, is often interpreted as a turning-point, for some observers the 'Icarus moment' of

his presidency. Indeed, the speech was among the most explicit on Delors' federal instincts towards a political Community.

Delors opened by asking '[Why] has it taken us more than 30 years to respond tentatively, with moves towards economic and monetary union, to the objective of a political Community set by the founding fathers?', then complaining, in guise of an answer to his question, that the Community was 'hamstrung by ridiculous quarrels rooted in nostalgic yearning for past glories', and that 'some quarters' dreamt of 'a return to facile nationalism or a temptation to play the Metternich card'. He maintained that 'it will be impossible from now on to separate the Community's economic role from its political one'. He also claimed that 'a grand confederation will not come into being until the Community achieves political union', alluding to a proposal President Mitterrand had just made in response to the fall of the Berlin Wall, albeit with much less federal intentions. The European Commission should become 'a proper executive answerable for its actions ... to the democratic institutions of the future federation', including a 'mechanism for appointing its President'. Prefiguring his second White Paper and again displaying his energetic forward thinking, he explained that 'the Single Act ... extends beyond the single market to solidarity through economic and social cohesion, to the social dimension, to the environment and to research and monetary cooperation, which contribute to competitiveness. It implies the creation of a single economic and social area, without which the Community would be a hollow creation, devoid of vitality and political will'.



Delors at the intergovernmental conference on EMU in Strasbourg in 1991.

Engineering Social Europe

Making Europe visible and perceptible for European citizens was a crucial issue for Delors. It was for this reason that, right from the start, he placed high importance in developing a Community social policy during his Commission presidency. This came to the fore, for instance, when Delors presented his political priorities to the European Parliament in January 1985, and said '... with regard to the supranational [single] market that we all want to see set up, is the significance of the social *espace européen*, which has still to be created'. By combining social policy with the single market and making use of the Member States' collective support for the single market programme, Delors managed to get the issue of social policy on the EC's agenda. As expressed in his 17 January 1990 speech, his overarching objective was to show that 'often the only aim in liberalising at national level is to help make harmonisation at Community level more effective'. He thereby countered accusations that the European Commission was obsessed with deregulation, but also confirmed the suspicions of Thatcher and others that he intended to introduce strong supranational regulatory policies in many policy areas.

As a social engineer, by his own definition, Delors had advocated more humane and cooperative relationships between social partners since the 1960s. As Commission President he argued that

economic growth as a result of the single market had to be balanced by solidarity among social partners. By solidarity, Delors meant, for example, finding solutions to long-term unemployment, implementing strategies for life-long training, establishing training programmes for efficient access to the labour market, especially targeting European youth, and establishing necessary safeguards against social dumping among the Member States. In addition, his social policy agenda included doubling and reorganising the ERDF in the Delors I package, to counter-balance the effects of completion of the single market between the less and more developed Member States.

As in the case of EMU, Delors and his team succeeded in inserting an invitation for the European Commission to develop a dialogue between management and labour at the European level in the reformed Treaty during the Single European Act negotiations. Delors quickly made use of this to organise meetings of the three European social partners: the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to represent workers' interests, the European Centre for Enterprises with Public Participation (CEEP) to represent the interests of public enterprises, and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe (UNICE) to represent private employers. However, as the bargaining between the three parties produced little result, Delors mobilised the EC's Economic and Social Committee to write a Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Workers. This charter of rights applying to workers in Europe was adopted by all Member States, with the exception of the United Kingdom, in December 1989.

Still far from satisfied, and other initiatives for building the social *espace européen* having failed, Delors continued to argue that, once single market legislation and EMU were in place, they would need to be complemented by a strong social dimension. His aim was to demonstrate that for the Community, monetary stringency and the fight against unemployment were not mutually opposed but were complementary. To underline this objective, he constantly recalled that the basis of the Community's architecture, underpinned by the Maastricht Treaty, was competition, cooperation and solidarity. In line with Delors' vision, the Commission published a White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness, and Employment in 1993. It recommended cooperation in research and development, the adoption of a new economic model taking into account the environment, and action to be taken regarding the employment market. As the Member States reacted unenthusiastically, however, the 1993 White Paper was not a success. Nevertheless, it was to Delors' credit that the EC/EU single market programme and the Maastricht Treaty were not only seen simply as pro-trade ventures but also as including a strong social agenda.

Moreover, as historian Alessandra Bitumi has argued, Delors' ambitions in the area of social policy helped to shape a renewed form of 'socially embedded capitalism' by building a social Europe together with the single market and EMU. Opposed to the neo-liberal character of US capitalism, for example, the model of social Europe developed by Delors became a popular narrative inside and outside Europe.

The legacy of Delors' European leadership

Outside Europe, Delors was able to make his voice heard, not only due to his social policy agenda for the EC/EU. A favourable geo-political constellation allowed him to contribute to international debate and to shape the Community's foreign policy. In the early 1990s, Delors met with many senior political leaders from all over the world to discuss global challenges. He was involved in international debates such as on the future of the Middle East and on the post-Cold War world, which remained important after the Delors Commission's mandate came to an end in 1995 (including a shortened third mandate (1994/1995) to enable the synchronisation of the Parliament's and the Commission's terms). At that time, his political standing in France was such that many leading figures in the PS encouraged him to stand in the presidential elections. Most contemporary opinion polls suggested that he stood a good chance of beating the centre-right opponent, Jacques Chirac. However, after weeks of reflection he declined – a decision he later described as one of the most difficult of his life. As in previous similar situations, his main concern was that he would

not be able to strike a balance between electoral promises and subsequent policy-making, which he knew would need to be more pragmatic.

Shortly after leaving the European Commission, Delors was entrusted with reporting on behalf of Unesco on 'Learning - The Treasure Within', chairing a committee of 15 global experts and delivering recommendations for educational policies. Like Monnet, Delors continued to contribute to shaping Europe's future after leaving public office. For example, from 1995 to 1999, he was President of the College of Europe in Bruges, founded in 1949 by founding fathers of the EU (including Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Paul-Henri Spaak), a group to which Delors can easily be added. In 1996, he founded a European think-tank, *Notre Europe*, in Paris, which later opened a branch in Berlin. Known today as *Notre Europe – Institut Jacques Delors*, it produces analyses and proposals aimed at European decision-makers, seeking to contribute to the process of uniting Europe. It has also opened the *Académie Jacques Delors*, which provides courses and training related to European integration. In 2019, the Berlin branch of *Notre Europe* merged with the Hertie School of Governance, a private university in Berlin, to become the Jacques Delors Centre. In January 2020, *Notre Europe – Institut Jacques Delors* opened a branch in Brussels. Delors has received many honorary doctorates, including from the European University Institute in Florence, and was the winner of the Charlemagne Prize in 1992. In 2015, he was appointed by the European Council as an Honorary Citizen of Europe, a distinction so far only bestowed on three persons (the two others being Jean Monnet and Helmut Kohl).

Some biographers stress Delors' life-long admiration for Monnet, with whom he shares common experience, such as at the *Commissariat général du plan*. Like Monnet, he was without doubt a gifted thinker, able to propose bold steps whilst working out how they might be achieved, and capable of withstanding set-backs to, and knock-on effects of, political decisions. Certainly not the first to see the common currency as a desirable concomitant, if not inevitable consequence, of the establishment of the single market, he was far-sighted enough to take practical preparatory steps towards EMU at a time when most political players considered this to be a utopian project. However, scholars of Delors' presidencies offer diverging interpretations of his strategic and diplomatic talents, notably in relation to the European Council. While some stress his pursuit of realistic reform in a thought-through order (for example, first realising the Single European Act, then striving for EMU), others sometimes criticise him for over-playing his hand in agenda-setting and provoking hostile reactions in the European Council.

Beyond his historic contribution to building the matrix of today's EU, Delors created a style of European political leadership that imposes a demanding standard on his successors. Political scientist Helen Drake has described Delors' style of leadership as drawing on both 'the national, more personalised types of leadership, and the incrementalist, rational-pragmatic style associated with the Commission in the early days of European integration'. Historian Piers Ludlow insists that much of Delors' success was due to his being a 'highly effective operator' at European Council level. The contribution of Commission Presidents to European integration is almost invariably measured against the Delors period. There can be no bigger compliment to his political achievement.

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