



## **Spring Day in Europe 2005**

# **A trip to the roots of the EU**

### **Chat Transcript**

This chat took place on the Spring Day in Europe Web site, on October 20, 2004. Spring Day in Europe is a project in which schools learn about European Union developments and incorporate them into the curriculum. Read more on our Web site: <http://futurum2005.eun.org>

#### **Guests:**

**Arnaud Pinon**, Manager  
**Julien Gascard**, Lecturer  
Jean Monnet House, France

#### **Participating Schools:**

Batthyany Lajos Grammar School, Nagykanizsa, Hungary  
Ceska Lipa, Czech Republic  
Engure Secondary School, Latvia  
M. Mortimer Junior Lyceum, St Lucija, Malta  
Osnovna sola Pivka, Slovenia



Our guests chatting with students and teachers

[Petru-EUN] Welcome everybody and thank you for joining us! Today, our guests are: Arnaud Pinon, manager and Julien Gascard, lecturer, both working at Maison de Jean Monnet, in Houjarray, near Paris.

[Batthyany3-Hungary] Hi, everybody! I'm Janos Blasszauer, a teacher of English from Hungary. It's great to be here with you and let me say thanks for this great opportunity. My students are looking forward to the chat event.

[Sue-Malta] Hello everybody! Greetings from sunny Malta.

[Monnet] Hello everybody ! We are Arnaud (38) and Julien (35), from the House of Jean Monnet. It's sunny weather here, near Paris. A good sign! We are ready to answer your questions.

[Brigitte] Did Jean Monnet foresee a EU with 25 members?

[Monnet] : Jean Monnet had no limit for a united political Europe, which included of course Central and Eastern Europe, whenever possible.

[Batthyany1-Hungary] What do you think Jean Monnet's legacy is for present Europe?

[Monnet] Jean Monnet's legacy is: 1) The idea of independent institutions, 2) EC law above national laws (primacy), 3) Working together looking for common interest, 4) Values: peace, solidarity, prosperity, 5) Never giving up, 6) "Making" Europe together is more important than "Europe".

[Sue-Malta]: Could he also imagine Turkey to be a member?

[Monnet]: About Turkey, the main concern of JM was in 1950 reconciliation of France and Germany, beginning of European construction. In the context of the cold war, he could not foresee the fall of Berlin wall, German reunification and fall of USSR. Turkey membership is more a question of our time.

[Katerina-Czech Republic]: What are the tasks of your organization? In which context was it founded?

[Monnet]: Our tasks: information and training about European construction, and European current issues. Building a bridge between the past, the present and the future of Europe, without forgetting our founding values! For figures and details, watch the end of our little movie.

[Batthyany2 -Hungary]: Which is Jean Monnet's most famous quote?

[Monnet]: Quotes: 1) We are not bringing States together, we unite people, 2) In life, you have choice between being someone and doing something. I've chosen the second one, there's less competition.

[Batthyany1-Hungary]: In what way can the Maison de Jean Monnet help students to get to know more about Monnet's thoughts, visions?

[Monnet]: The House of Jean Monnet welcomes 13.000 visitors/year and organizes 250 conferences for pupils, students from all over the world. Lectures in French and English. Our webzine is [www.cahierseuropeens.net](http://www.cahierseuropeens.net).

[Petru-EUN]: Batthyany, your teacher Mr Janos has attended such a meeting last year.

[Ospivka-Slovenia]: I think that Jean Monnet hasn't been recognised enough for all the work he has done. There should be more told about him in our schools.

[Monnet]: For the last ten years, more and more schools have been named after Jean Monnet. Jean Monnet is the name used the most for French schools today.

[Ospivka-Slovenia]: I think the new countries will be beginning to get to know him much better now that we are in the EU.

[Monnet]: Yes, Ospivka ! It's also the task of your governments to explain to the population and to your national schools to include European history/citizenship in programs.

[Batthyany2 – Hungary]: What was Jean Monnet.'s greatest virtue?

[Monnet]: Monnet's virtues: humility, listen to everyone's opinion, never giving up, working hard, "not optimistic but determined", simple, having a worldwide network and a global vision (already).

[Batthyany1-Hungary]: How do you think as students we can spread Monnet's ideas? (ie.: What can we do for a better Europe?)

[Monnet]: You students should learn more about Europe, and if interested, join political European movements. And share your knowledge around you.

[Engure-Latvia]: How many countries were in the first EU meeting?

[Monnet]: If the EU meeting means EU membership, there were six founding countries: Belgium, France, Western Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Luxemburg.

[Ospivka]: Where are his children employed? Are they disseminating his message?

[Monnet]: Monnet's daughter Marianne is vice-president of our association. In addition, Monnet has a lot of "spiritual children" who try and spread his ideas, both among citizens and top political leaders... recently, it was reminded to the European Commission not to forget Jean Monnet's legacy in its brochures, for instance. New brochures referring to European construction all mention Monnet.

[Aiva-Latvia]: How many visitors come to Jean Monnet's house every year? Do you have to apply before?

[Monnet]: Visitors to the House: already answered, 13,000 per year (100, 15 years ago). Young people, managers, ambassadors, MEPs, political leaders, journalists.

[JanMartins-Latvia]: I can make one conclusion from what we learn: Jean Monnet was a very good businessman, a prophet and a political genius. Do you agree?

[Monnet]: OK, with your analysis, even though he would have been himself very embarrassed. We would say that he was more a visionary man than a prophet.

[Ospivka-Slovenia]: We are very optimistic about the EU. But as all small countries we are afraid of the future and what it will bring. We are afraid of being left out or at the end of the line. What is your opinion about that?

[Monnet]: Small countries: the EU is the first international organisation where small countries are listened to. In many institutions, one country = one voice. I discussed lately with Finnish politicians who said to me that their country never played such a role in history as when they presided the EU (very well) a few years ago. They were very proud and happy about that. In addition, for a small country, better be part of a powerful group than isolated.

[Ospivka-Slovenia]: Our pupils are already asking how long do you think a united Europe of this kind will last? It will take a lot of perseverance and patience on all sides to maintain it the way Jean Monnet envisaged it.

[Monnet]: In 400 years, there have been 26 wars between France and Germany (and other European countries). It took a lot of energy and work to bring peace to the first generation of Europeans. We all have to work together to make this last for the next generations.

[Ospivka-Latvia]: Did Jean Monnet ever consider Paris as the centre of the EU and not Brussels?

[Monnet]: Jean Monnet was a citizen of the world. He has been living in Cognac, Paris, Luxemburg, London, Washington, San Francisco, New York, Shanghai. So, for him, there is no centre, just a group of countries and of people working together towards the same goal, and fighting for their common interests.

[Zane1-Latvia] says: Hello, why is Jean Monnet's name not so widely mentioned as Robert Schuman? For us it is something quite new to learn.

[Monnet]: Jean Monnet is less known because himself was always inspiring prominent leaders, but never held political responsibilities himself... It was his choice to be behind the scene, in order to remain free, and influence the leaders who would then use his ideas. He wrote the "Schuman declaration" in April 1950, but it is called the SCHUMAN declaration because the French Foreign Minister presented the text and took the political responsibility to do so.

[Sue-Malta]: What did Jean Monnet think of the language 'problem'- even on Malta we have different languages. Bring people together means speak a common language.

[Monnet]: Language: he learnt English when he was 16, in the cognac business and talked English with everyone. Not common for a Frenchman, especially at that time. He regretted not to speak any German, respected diversity, but as a pragmatic and efficient man, he was using the easiest way to communicate.

[Janmartins-Latvia]: Was Jean Monnet clever?

[Monnet]: Clever? He invented the Franco-British pool for ships during WW1, was N°2 of the League of Nations aged 31, a banker, helped the Chinese, Polish and Romanian governments between the two wars, advised Churchill and Roosevelt and influenced them during WW2, made the French economic and equipment reconstruction Plan, then invented the European Community...

[Zane1-Latvia]: Are there any traditional activities in Jean Monnet's house every year?

[Monnet]: We have already described our activities previously in the chat and in the little movie.

[Ospivka-Slovenia]: By visiting so many countries he had the opportunity to see how people live in many places in the world - some rich, some poor...and he probably saw how education was handled in these places. What was his vision concerning education in Europe if he had one?

[Martins-Latvia]: Did Monnet have a children and how many?

[Monnet]: Jean Monnet had two daughters: Anna (1929) and Marianne (1941).

[Martins-Latvia]: How old was Jean Monnet when he had the idea of European Union?

[Monnet]: Jean Monnet was 62 in 1950 when he "invented" the European Community. He retired in 1975 aged 87, and died aged 91 in 1979.

[Oxana-Latvia]: Where did Jean Monnet live?

[Monnet]: Jean Monnet lived all around the world (see previous answer). He finished his life (1945-1979), where we are now, in Houjarray, 45 kms away from Paris...

[Ospivka-Latvia]: On behalf of my pupils I would like to thank our guests for their answers. We now have a better picture of this famous man and of his contributions to our common European space. Bye from Slovenia.

[Inara1-Latvia]: The best memories I have of Jean Monnet house are the roses by the wall in January. Are they blooming now?

[Monnet]: Roses, offered by US President Eisenhower and his wife, will bloom in springtime, for the Spring Day in Europe.

[Sue-Malta]: Clever roses.

[Monnet]: Thank you everybody for joining in and for your questions! It was difficult but a real pleasure to answer your questions! Enjoy your time now!

[Petru-EUN]: Good-bye and thank you for today! Have a nice afternoon! Thank you to Arnaud and Julien who accepted to be our today's guests!

[Monnet]: Thank you Brigitte and Petru for your help! Thank you EUN! Thank you to all participants again and good-bye!