

Jacqueline Noel: A Career of Global Significance

Jacqueline Noel was a citizen of the world and a staunch European

She wholeheartedly believed in Nelson Mandela's statement that "education is the most powerful weapon one can use to change the world." She had the privilege of meeting the former South African President during the course of her professional journey.



Jacqueline NOEL's story begins in Verviers (Belgium) in 1940, during the German occupation, a time of war that she remembers despite her young age.

Her academic background enabled her to secure a position as a trainee at the F.N.R.S. (Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique) and led her to obtain a Doctorate in economics from the Université Libre de Bruxelles. There, her research focused on regional integration in the context of the E.E.C. a time when Europe was just beginning its journey.

She possessed an inquiring mind and a strong desire to engage in intellectual work.

In 1970, she joined the Young Professional Program at the World Bank, under the chairmanship of Robert McNamara, before moving to the headquarter at Washington as a Loan Officer, and then in 1981 to the Regional Directorate for West Africa, based in Abidjan, to implement the first Structural Adjustment Program.



She acknowledged that starting her career at the World Bank presented a valuable opportunity to take on new challenges, meet new people and achieve professional goals that were sometimes difficult but exhilarating.

In 1984, she joined the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg where she was appointed Head of Division in the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Direction

As the EIB's first woman in senior management, she was instrumental in initiating a working group, COPEC (Comité Paritaire d'Egalité des Chances) in European legislation, "to make optimum use of all existing talents without discrimination" reflecting her energetic and determined approach to enabling everyone to fulfil their potential.

This initiative also enabled the EIB to join the ORIGIN network (Organisational and Institutional Gender Information Network), set up in response to the Beijing Declaration adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women (1995).



ORIGIN member Jacqueline Noel of the European Investment Bank (*right, foreground*) led a session on data collection and surveys at the network's first meeting at World Bank headquarters in June 1996.

Jacqueline NOEL has worked in and on Africa all her professional life: the continent represented fascinating challenges for her, considering that there was much to be done, but where any intervention could have a real impact. She consistently observed that numerous success stories existed, yet they were frequently overlooked.

She was known for her professionalism, her subtle mind but also her impartial judgement and her great commitment to her work. Her passion for development led her to take firm and innovative positions in this field, sometimes overcoming the initial opposition of her peers or obtaining institutional support for these initiatives, Some of these initiatives have been translated into various Partnership Agreements between the European Union and the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) States.

It is challenging to summarize Jacqueline Noel's role and contribution to the institutions to which she has dedicated her entire career with such dynamism and dedication in a few words. Her expertise and experience in the field of development were widely recognized and led her to participate in numerous commissions and expert groups, where she was able to contribute to the stimulating atmosphere, even though she was often the only female voice in the debate.



She was always keen to share her knowledge and experience with her younger colleagues, helping them to develop their skills. Her ability to work as part of a team, her intellectual leadership and her human qualities earned her a great deal of recognition, both from her colleagues in Washington and Luxembourg, and from the personalities and contacts in her professional activities that she enjoyed meeting in the four corners of the world.



In 2001, she was appointed Associate Director of the ACP Africa Caribbean Pacific Direction, and concluded her career as Honorary Director in 2005



Departure from the EIB with President Maystadt.

After leaving the B.E.I. Jacqueline Noel became Secretary General of AABEI, the EIB Alumni Association, where she was very active until illness forced her to give up this new role in 2018.

Jacqueline Noel possessed a charismatic presence and a profound sense of empathy, driven throughout her life by a strong desire to leave her mark. She was also a discreet donor to many charities working in the field of development and education.

In accordance with this commitment to philanthropy, she made the decision to create a foundation dedicated to her memory to preserve the values that were hers: the conviction that dedication and commitment can effect positive change for the benefit of all and enable individuals to achieve their full potential in a life that aligns with their unique qualities and values.

Evelyne Pourteau, founder.