

WILFRIED MARTENS PAYS TRIBUTE TO PIERRE HARMEL

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Wilfried Martens, the President of the European People's Party (EPP), paid tribute today to former Belgian Prime Minister **Pierre Harmel**, one of the most important Belgian politicians since World War II, who passed away on Sunday at the age of 98:

"Pierre Harmel played an important role in Belgium and in Europe. He chaired a Centre of politicians and academics that created the Flemish, French and German language communities to which cultural autonomy was accorded.

In 1958 he was the main architect of the School Pact by which the free choice of one's school was realized.

I was privileged to start my political career as advisor to Pierre Harmel when he became Prime Minister of Belgium in 1965.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs (from 1966 to 1973) he developed the "Harmel-doctrine". He supported open and stable relations with countries of the Eastern bloc by a determined and reformed Atlantic partnership. He was one of the politicians with vision who prepared the groundwork for a re-united Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Moreover, on the basis of his Christian Democratic values and texts, I was able to draft EPP's Basic Programme, which was approved in Athens in 1992.

Pierre Harmel will be truly missed."

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