Many European historians were deeply disturbed by the disastrous impact of the first world conflict. In the academic field, its consequences were manifold: political activism in peace organizations, activism in veterans’ associations, but also changes in their programmes and research methods following Henri Pirenne’s suggestion in his inaugural conference of the International Congress of Historical Sciences at Brussels in 1923. New possibilities of intervention appeared in these years: historians could be active participants in international organizations oriented towards intellectual cooperation such as the “International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation”, an organ of the League of Nations created in Paris in 1924. They could also attempt to develop large scale research inquiries based on international collaboration. The paper is based on the archives from the 1920s and 1930s of some French historians who played an important role in the emergence of a new position of the researcher in the civic space, far from the more traditional political activism.