

The question of location

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As soon as the European Economic Community (EEC) was established, political and legal wrangling began over where the European institutions should be located. The Member States were unable to reach agreement on a permanent seat, particularly since the concept of a 'European District', proposed by Jean Monnet, won little support. From 1958, the Commissions of the EEC and of the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) had their seats in Brussels.

Until such time as the Member States reach agreement on a single permanent seat for the Community institutions, European officials are assigned to Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, an arrangement which leads, in particular, to a considerable increase in overheads. Brussels was chosen as the seat of the Single Commission and of the Council of Ministers. In practical terms, this meant that most European officials were employed there. Luxembourg sought compensation for the loss of the High Authority and the Special Council of Ministers of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), both of which were relocated to Brussels. However, Luxembourg became the seat for the new European Investment Bank (EIB) and was given the assurance that some meetings of the Council of Ministers would be held there, in April, June and September. The Court of Justice, the Statistical Office, the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, the Consultative Committee and financial services of the ECSC and the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly also remained in Luxembourg. Meanwhile, France refused to renounce its claim that Strasbourg should be the seat of the Parliamentary Assembly. A compromise was reached whereby Parliament's Members meet in plenary session in Strasbourg but meetings of parliamentary committees are held in Brussels. Until 1981, some part-sessions were also held in Luxembourg, which remains the seat of the Secretariat of the European Parliament.