

Seat of the European Parliament

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Seat of the European Parliament

The founding Treaties provide that the seat of the institutions is to be determined by common accord of the governments of the Member States [Article 216 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC), Article 189 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) and Article 77 of the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)].

In its recommendation of 21 June 1958, the European Parliamentary Assembly took the view that the Assembly should have its seat at the same place where the Foreign Ministers of the Six agreed to locate the European organisations — a decision which had been taken at the meeting of 6 and 7 January 1958 in Paris — although they agreed that plenary sessions might be held at other venues. On 23 June 1958, the Assembly nominated candidate cities which might become the seat of the institutions. The three cities at the end of the first ballot were Brussels, Strasbourg and Milan. The Assembly asked the governments to take a decision as quickly as possible.

Despite this request, the Foreign Ministers Conference held on 1 July 1958 did not come to a decision on the seat. For a long time, the governments of the Member States adopted no more than temporary solutions to the problem.

A decision was adopted when the Merger Treaty of 8 April 1965 was concluded. Luxembourg, Brussels and Strasbourg were confirmed as temporary seats of the institutions.

Having more than one place of work led to a series of arguments, with particular regard to the European Parliament.

Between 1967 and 1981, the European Parliament held some part-sessions in Luxembourg, against the wishes of France. It started to hold committee and political group meetings in Brussels. On 20 November 1980, Parliament — in vain — gave an ultimatum to the governments with a view to forcing them to take the decisions required to ensure its smooth running before 15 June 1981. On 7 July 1981, it decided to hold part-sessions in Strasbourg alone. In 1985 it decided to build a chamber in Brussels for the holding of some part-sessions. All these European Parliament initiatives were challenged by certain Member States before the Court of Justice.

The conflict between those in favour of Brussels and those in favour of Strasbourg even broke out in Parliament itself. It took until 1992 for a final decision to be taken on the location of the seats of the institutions.

The European Parliament has its seat in Strasbourg, where the twelve monthly part-sessions, including the budget part-session, are held. Parliament also holds additional part-sessions in Brussels. European Parliament committees meet in Brussels. Parliament's Secretariat and services are based in Luxembourg (Article 1 of the Decision taken by common accord between the representatives of the governments of the Member States on 12 December 1992, on the location of the seats of the institutions and of certain bodies and departments of the European Communities).

On this subject, the European Parliament declared that a decision which would effectively divide its activities between three separate Member States was incompatible with the Treaties and with the natural prerogatives of a Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage, which has the right to decide on its own working methods in order to fulfil its tasks as efficiently as possible. It does not consider itself bound by anything which would be contrary to the Treaties (Resolution of 16 December 1992 on the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council held on 11 and 12 December 1992).

A Protocol determining the seats of the institutions was annexed to the Treaties by the Amsterdam Treaty of 2 October 1997. It confirmed the decision taken in Edinburgh.

Address:

Allée du Printemps B.P. 1024/F F-67070 Strasbourg Cedex

Rue Wiertz B.P. 1047 B-1047 Bruxelles/Wiertzstraat Postbus 1047 B-1047 Brussel

Plateau de Kirchberg B.P. 1601 L-2929 Luxembourg