

Luxembourg City Council Resolution (7 March 1958)

Caption: On 7 March 1958, the Luxembourg City Council unanimously adopts a resolution on Luxembourg's application to become the official seat of the European institutions.

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Resolution of the Luxembourg City Council (7 March 1958)

‘The Luxembourg City Council,

having regard to the conclusions of the Paris Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 6 and 7 January 1958,

whereas the question of the choice of the seats of the European Communities will be discussed at a further conference of the six governments next June, after various prior consultation exercises,

convinced that the seat of the European Communities should not be removed from the City of Luxembourg, where it has been located for over five years,

Believes that the people of Luxembourg, schooled in the age-old traditions of the cultural influences of their neighbours, have always fostered the European spirit and have thereby contributed, at the crossroads of nations, to the creation of an ideal environment for a union of European nations;

Recalls that, given its central location, its communications infrastructure and the accommodation that it offers, the City of Luxembourg fulfils every requirement that might influence the choice made by the governments;

Draws attention to the major and successful efforts made in Luxembourg, by both public authorities and private initiative, to provide optimum working conditions for the European institutions already established in the country;

Notes that the town planning and building projects already create the appropriate framework for the permanent establishment and any future extension of the European institutions;

Calls upon the governments of the six countries to take a final decision to approve the choice of the Luxembourg capital, which is prepared to take any additional steps required, as the seat of the European institutions, or at least as the permanent seat of the European Coal and Steel Community and Euratom, if the single seat principle is not adopted.’

The Committee of Experts consisted of delegates from each of the six European Community Member States. It was to present a report to the Council of Ministers by 30 April on the potential of the cities officially applying to become the sole seat of the European institutions, namely Brussels, Luxembourg, Milan, Monza, Paris (Département of Seine-et-Oise), Strasbourg, Stresa and Turin.

The programme for the visit to Luxembourg by the experts included a working meeting at the Ministry of Public Works, attended by the Minister, Mr Victor Bodson. The experts were then received at Government Headquarters by Mr Joseph Bech, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. After a dinner given by the Mayor and municipal authorities of Luxembourg, they toured the city of Luxembourg, the surrounding area and the site proposed as a centre for the European institutions.

At 5 p.m., the experts were received at the Luxembourg City Hall by the Mayor, Mr Émile Hamilius, and Aldermen Rollinger, Koenig and Fischbach. Mr Hamilius and Mr Fischbach outlined the background to Luxembourg’s application, and Mr Fischbach also gave them documentation about Luxembourg. Central and local government experts were present at the briefing to answer any questions raised by members of the Committee.

The day ended with a dinner given by the Government at the Maison de Cassal, hosted by the Minister for Public Works, Mr Victor Bodson.

Each member of the Committee was given a folder of technical material on Luxembourg, including, in particular, a package entitled ‘Luxembourg, Seat of the European Institutions’, a map showing the distances between

Luxembourg Airport and the main European airports, an aerial view of Luxembourg City, a relief map of the city and surrounding area, a map showing the growth of the city from its origins, a historical map of the city and the fortress, a general map of the city, geological maps, a geological profile of the Kirchberg, a Kirchberg development plan and photos of a model of the development of the European Centre.

The following information was submitted to the members of the Committee of Experts in the package for their consideration.

‘At its meeting of 7 March 1958, the Luxembourg City Council decided to submit an application for Luxembourg City to be designated as the seat of the European institutions. The application was approved and supported by the Luxembourg Government.

Luxembourg took that decision in the light of the outcome of the Conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs held on 6 January 1958.

The Government was also prompted to take this initiative by a very dynamic European Movement with supporters drawn from a very wide section of the population and from all parties, inspired by the Grand Duchy’s traditional policy of international cooperation and friendship and declaring a firm belief in European unity.

Luxembourg’s position on the issue of the seat is best expressed in the statement made by the Prime Minister, Mr Joseph Bech, on 8 September 1957: ‘Luxembourg is preparing to respond, where necessary, to any requirements that the other governments might set for us in the mutual interests of the Europe that we are building.’

Luxembourg’s suitability as a seat for the European institutions derives from a number of factors.

Historical role, geographical location

The country’s thousand-year history has brought its innate qualities to the fore. Luxembourg is situated at the point where the Germanic and the Latin worlds meet. It has elements of both worlds. It is a natural crossing point, an area of transition between those two main axes of European civilisation. The historic meetings that have taken place within its borders in various periods would have led to an understanding between Western European countries under more favourable political conditions. And the first foundations of the new Europe have recently been laid on its soil. Its traditional role of mediation and, indeed, of reconciliation makes it eminently suited to a new role, offering the countries in the Europe of the Six a place for understanding and long-term cooperation.

As an intermediate country, it has managed to bring together those so often opposing worlds, both in its appearance and in the way that its people live. The varied landscape in a small geographical area has elements familiar to foreigners from both east and west. Because those visitors felt at home there, the Grand Duchy and its capital city have earned a reputation for hospitality and intimacy.

Languages and international outlook

Luxembourg is bilingual, and its bilingualism is a very valuable asset that will undoubtedly play a significant part in bringing together the nations called upon to achieve European integration. The teaching and use of the two languages, German and French, have given its people a broad view of the world, indeed a more humane understanding of often contrasting and sometimes conflicting attitudes. To be sure, this bilingualism will be valuable not only from the administrative and technical points of view but often also in the daily contacts that will be needed.

Is it that bilingualism or the small size of the country (which prevents its inhabitants from being too chauvinistic) that have encouraged curiosity about the outside world? Whichever is the case, Luxembourg has an international

outlook on which visitors often remark. It is exposed to influences from all sides. Its broad understanding of different points of view is natural and spontaneous. Not only is that the basis for the government's international cooperation policy, it is an intrinsic feature of a general attitude in many aspects of life. It is the foundation for the calm and firm belief of the Luxembourg people that Europe must become integrated in order to establish peace amongst all its member nations. It is to that spirit, and the willingness to make sacrifices for a good cause, that the European Coal and Steel Community owes the fact that it has found the space it needed to develop and carry out its work, often within a very short period.

Geographical location

The city lies at the crossroads between nations, more or less equidistant from Bonn, Brussels, The Hague and Paris and easily accessible from Rome, with which it has direct rail and air links. It is right in the centre of the large north-west European triangle which straddles five national borders and encompasses the most powerful demographic and economic concentration in Europe. With its metallurgical, industrial and commercial firms and banks, Luxembourg City has a far more extensive technical and administrative infrastructure than any other city of its size. The facilities at Luxembourg's Findel Airport, the road and rail links and the telecommunications are capable of meeting the most stringent requirements.

Working and living environment

Luxembourg City also has the enormous advantage that it provides the ideal conditions for creative work, negotiation, contacts and thought, without the problems and stresses of a large conurbation. On that note, we would point out that people who are well-versed in European affairs and have set the tone for the new work have emphasised that feature publicly and of their own accord. In a letter to the six governments of the Member States of the Community dated 11 December 1957, the High Authority noted 'its excellent working conditions in the five years that it has been based in Luxembourg'. We would point out in passing that, although the seat of the ECSC is only temporary, over 1 000 officials and their families have enjoyed highly satisfactory working and living conditions in Luxembourg, thanks to the efforts of the Government, the City Council and private individuals. Pending the establishment of a permanent administrative centre for all the European institutions on the proposed site, Luxembourg City would be able to find a satisfactory solution to any office and private accommodation problems, as it has done for the ECSC.

The natural setting of the country offers wide opportunities for leisure and sport. In addition to the cultural facilities in Luxembourg City (theatre, conferences, artistic events, primary, secondary and higher education), all tastes can be catered for in the major German, French, Belgian and Dutch centres of art and culture, which are easily accessible. Furthermore, the first European coeducation system with integrated national curricula, awarding primary and secondary certificates recognised in the six countries, has been demonstrating its effectiveness and excellence for several years now.

Politics

The hardworking people of Luxembourg have a remarkably high standard of living and have enjoyed social and political stability for the past 25 years. The fact that, in political terms, the country is not a major power makes it the ideal place for the creation and growth of new bodies which thus avoid being exposed to troublesome influences from the outset.

The European Centre in Luxembourg

Finally, the potential for extending Luxembourg City, which is being considered by our town planners, offers the future European Centre on the Kirchberg an unparalleled site. Its layout and situation are exceptional; it faces due south, is surrounded with greenery and is close to the city centre. It looks out onto one of the finest urban vistas imaginable: the view of Luxembourg from the east. A site for a new European Centre in a town-planning and

architectural style that is bold and modern can be made available on the Kirchberg. The contrast between the old city that has grown up over the centuries and the new centre built as a single entity would certainly be striking, but it would be an inspiring contrast, combining a vision of Europe's venerable thousand-year history and all its hopes and potential for the future.'