

The seat of WEU

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The seat of Western European Union

Western European Union (WEU) had a series of different seats over the years. Its bodies were also located in different places depending on their mission.

For nearly 40 years the official seat of the Permanent Council and the Secretariat-General of WEU was in London. The meetings of the Council of Ministers were, however, held in other European capitals and cities, as circumstances dictated ⁽¹⁾. On 26 October 1987, in The Hague, the Council decided to group all the ministerial bodies of WEU in a single capital city.

The Permanent Council and the Secretariat-General of WEU were transferred to 4, rue de la Régence, Brussels on 1 January 1993. The political reasoning behind the move was to bring WEU closer to the seats of NATO and the main institutions of the European Union (EU), thereby allowing it to play its part more effectively as a link between the Atlantic Alliance and the EU, as suggested in the Maastricht Treaty.

However, following the decisions taken by the WEU Council of Ministers meeting in Porto (May 2000) and Marseille (November 2000) on the transfer of the organisation's crisis-management functions to the EU, its Secretariat-General was restructured and slimmed down to 29 posts. At the end of June 2001, the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG) and the Research Cell of the Western European Armaments Organisation (WEAO) joined the Secretariat-General at the new premises of WEU in Brussels at 15, rue de l'Association ⁽²⁾. After the decision to wind up the organisation, the offices in rue de l'Association were emptied on 30 June 2011.

The Agencies associated with monitoring and with industrial and technological cooperation ⁽³⁾, together with the working groups, were accommodated wherever the Secretariat-General of WEU was, as were the Planning Cell, the Military Committee, the Situation Centre and the Intelligence Section; all these bodies were installed in Brussels in the 1990s.

The Western European Union Institute for Security Studies, operating since 1 July 1990 and set up by decision of the WEU Council of Ministers on 13 November 1989, was accommodated in Paris on the third floor of the building occupied by the Parliamentary Assembly of WEU, which was owned by WEU. When WEU was closed and the building, which was mostly owned by WEU, was sold, the Institute for Security Studies — which had become a European Union agency following the Joint Action of July 2001 that came into operation on January 2002 — had to find new premises. Following the liquidation of WEU, the Institute moved to avenue du Suffren in Paris.

The WEU Satellite Centre, created following the meeting of the Council of Ministers in Vianden on 27 June 1991 ⁽⁴⁾, was built under Spanish responsibility on a piece of land granted to it on an air force base in Torrejón de Ardoz in the suburbs of Madrid. The Centre was opened on 28 April 1993 and became operational on 13 May 1997, after WEU ministers had approved the plans for its use in Paris in May 1997.

The Parliamentary Assembly of WEU was based in Paris ⁽⁵⁾ until its dissolution in June 2011. It occupied several floors of a building at 43, avenue du Président Wilson in the 16th arrondissement. The parliamentary sessions took place in the building next door, where there was a chamber belonging to the French Economic and Social Council, in the place d'Iéna. The Assembly held a number of sittings in other capitals (London, Rome, Brussels and Bonn) and regularly held lectures and conferences in different countries chosen because of the subject under discussion or because a particular country was holding the presidency of the Council of WEU. The number of external activities was gradually reduced as a result of increasingly limited financial resources. Ultimately, the sale of the building on avenue du Président Wilson, administered by France, enabled the proceeds to be shared out between the ten Member States with the aim of starting up a pension fund ⁽⁶⁾.

According to a press release from the Luxembourg National Archives announcing an event on the 'WEU archives' to be held on 17 December 2012, the WEU Permanent Council, meeting in May 2011, welcomed the proposal by the Luxembourg Government to transfer the organisation's archives to the Luxembourg National Archives and to give the CVCE the task of exploiting these holdings for research purposes. The reasons for

this decision appear to have been the importance of preserving the organisation's heritage on a single site and offering easy access to the archives.

Between early June and late October 2011, some 800 linear metres of historically significant material were transported from Paris, London, Florence and Brussels to Luxembourg. The National Archives are now responsible for conserving these documents and making them accessible.

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- (1) The first meeting of the Council of WEU took place at the British Embassy in Paris on 7 May 1955.
- (2) The WEAG and the WEAO had initially been based in rue de la Régence, in a building separate from but close to the WEU Secretariat-General.
- (3) The Agency for the Control of Armaments (ACA), the Standing Armaments Committee (SAC), the WEAG and the WEAO.
- (4) The decision on where to site the Centre was taken at the Council of Ministers of November 1991, in Bonn.
- (5) The Assembly of WEU held its first sessions (the very first was on 5 July 1955) in Strasbourg, in the chamber of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, before moving to Paris in 1959.
- (6) Three-quarters of the building was owned by WEU and one-quarter by France.