

European Parliament press release, Call for a treaty change to allow Parliament to decide where it sits (14 October 2013)

Caption: On 14 October 2013, the Members of the European Parliament call for an EU treaty revision procedure to be initiated to allow Parliament to decide on the location of its seat and its internal organisation.

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Call for a treaty change to allow Parliament to decide where it sits

Committees Committee on Constitutional Affairs [14-10-2013 - 18:41]

The European Parliament should have the right to decide where and when it meets, said the Constitutional Affairs Committee on Monday. MEPs undertake to initiate an EU treaty revision procedure to propose the changes needed to allow Parliament to decide on the location of its seat and its internal organisation.

"Today's vote is excellent news for the integrity of this Parliament, and even better news for Europe's taxpayers. Sooner or later this whole wasteful travelling circus has to be stopped in its tracks. I believe today's vote will be seen as a landmark in that process and a key achievement in our campaign to impose some sanity on this system. This house must be allowed to determine for itself where it sits. The will of the people must not be ignored on this issue, nor must the wishes of MEPs", said co-rapporteur Ashley Fox (ECR, UK).

"In times of crisis, it is not credible for the EU to expect only citizens to accept changes and budget cuts. The 'travelling circus' arrangements forced upon the European Parliament by EU member states cost huge amounts of money, damage the environment and are disliked by a large majority of EU citizens. Our report shows how Parliament – the only directly elected body representing over 500 million EU citizens – can break free from being taken hostage by the member states and demand the right to decide itself when and where it meets", added co-rapporteur Gerald Häfner (Greens/EFA, DE)

Treaty change to be initiated by Parliament

MEPs suggest initiating an ordinary treaty revision procedure to propose the changes needed "to allow Parliament to decide the location of its seat and its internal organisation". Under Article 48 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the European Parliament can submit proposals to the Council for the amendment of the EU treaties.

A single place of work

"The European Parliament would be more effective, cost-efficient and respectful of the environment if it were located in a single place", says the text, approved by 22 votes to 4.

"The continuation of the monthly migration between Brussels and Strasbourg has become a symbolic negative issue (..), especially at a time when the financial crisis has led to serious and painful cuts in expenditure in Member States", it adds.

The report says that additional annual costs resulting from Parliament's geographic dispersion have been estimated at between €156 million and €204 million, equivalent to approximately 10% of Parliament's annual budget. The CO2 emissions associated with moving among the three working locations have been estimated at between 11,000 and 19,000 tonnes.

The current working arrangements also impose additional costs and travel on the other EU institutions and on journalists.

Request for an analysis of the potential savings

The committee asks the Court of Auditors to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential savings for its budget "if the Parliament had only one place of work, in Brussels". This analysis should include budgetary aspects and ancillary costs such as savings made as a result of loss of working time and efficiency, says the text.

MEPs insist that it will be necessary to "agree on an appropriate compromise whereby

existing Parliament buildings can continue to be used".

What do the current treaties say?

Protocol 6 to the treaties lays down that "Parliament shall have its seat in Strasbourg" where 12 periods of monthly plenary sessions shall be held. Its three working places are Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg.

Article 341 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) says that the seat of the institutions of the Union shall be determined by "common accord of the governments of the Member States".

Next steps

The report is to be put to a vote by Parliament as a whole at the November plenary session.

In the chair: Carlo Casini (EPP, IT)

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#EPseat

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