



Strasbourg for all Plenary Sessions

A first step has been taken by the European Parliament to grapple with the vexed problem of its meeting places. By voting on 7 July to hold all plenary sessions in Strasbourg it has now formally eliminated Luxembourg as a venue for such sessions. The Luxembourg government has reacted by threatening to take the Parliament before the Court of Justice and possibly to withhold from the Community a sum equivalent to its share of the Parliament's budget. Although the resolution passed did recognise "the need for a single working place" and that the Parliament had "already asserted its right to meet and work where it chooses", the majority of Members did not want a direct clash with the Council of Ministers and rejected amendments calling for the holding of plenary sessions in Brussels and the transfer of the staff to that city.

Under the Community treaties it is the responsibility of the member governments to fix "the seat of the institutions". They have never done so and the five institutions are scattered between Brussels and Luxembourg. Although some Commission departments are in Luxembourg and the Council of Ministers meets sometimes in that city, it is the Parliament which suffers most. With its secretariat in Luxembourg, its committees usually meeting in Brussels and most of its plenary sessions in Strasbourg, the Parliament has been seriously hampered by this three-way split. Members and staff alike have complained with increasing bitterness. They doubtless will do so still, for nothing substantive was settled by the 7 July vote and the problem is likely to come up again soon.

For a year the Parliament's Political Affairs Committee had been preparing a report on the issue. Early drafts by Mario Zagari (Soc/It) showed a strong tendency in favour of Brussels. But at the final meeting of the committee before the 7 July debate a more conciliatory text was narrowly adopted.

TABLE 1: How the groups voted

	Amendment 12		Amendment 25		Amendment 11	
	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con
Communist	—	22	—	23	—	20
Socialist	47	38	52	37	49	40
Christian Democrat	15	67	9	74	13	69
European Democrat	47	5	50	4	47	5
Progressive Democrat	—	17	—	18	1	17
Liberal	3	26	3	24	3	26
Independent	5	18	7	13	4	16
TOTAL	117	193	121	193	117	193

The final resolution lists the complaints against the present situation and the inaction of the governments and calls on the latter to do their duty. It proposes that a conciliation procedure be opened with the Council and, pending the final decision on a single meeting place, to hold the sessions in Strasbourg and as a general rule to have its committee and group meetings in Brussels. The resolution also states that the operation of the secretariat and technical

services should be reviewed to meet the Strasbourg and Brussels decisions and a study of advanced communications techniques should be undertaken. In urging also improvements in travel facilities between the three cities the resolution implies that a decision on a single seat is a long way off . . .

Thirty-five amendments were put down to the Zagari resolution and six were accepted, including two which asserted that one place of work was essential and that Parliament had a right to make its own decision on the matter.

Among the rejected amendments were four put down by Members of the European Democratic Group. Three were straightforward demands for a move to Brussels while the fourth provided for a choice by secret ballot between the three cities. In secret ballot all four amendments were rejected by about 70 votes. Other "pro-Brussels" amendments were taken by open ballot and these permit an analysis by both political group and nationality (see tables).

TABLE 2: How the nationalities voted

	Amendment 12		Amendment 25		Amendment 11	
	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con
United Kingdom	56	10	59	10	56	12
Greece	—	21	1	17	1	20
Germany	18	41	21	42	23	40
Denmark	5	2	5	2	6	1
France	—	60	—	59	—	58
Italy	5	42	8	41	5	42
Ireland	—	6	1	6	1	6
Luxembourg	—	5	—	4	—	5
Netherlands	20	5	14	9	15	7
Belgium	13	1	12	3	10	2
TOTAL	117	193	121	193	117	193

Amendment 12 put down by several German Socialists plumped for Brussels though offering a small consolation prize to Strasbourg in agreeing to one or more plenary sessions being held there each year. Amendment 25 by Lord Douro (Dem/UK) was similar in intent. Amendment 11 by the Socialist Group offered Members an option of voting for Brussels or for Strasbourg and for transferring the secretariat to the city chosen. All three were rejected by 193 votes to 121 or 117.

Table 1 shows that, by political group, the main strength of the partisans of Brussels lay in the European Democrat and Socialist groups, though many of the latter (French, Italian and Greek) voted with the majority. Against a firm Brussels move were all the Communists and Progressive Democrats together with the overwhelming majority of Christian Democrats and Liberals.

By nationality a north-south split is discernible. For Brussels were the British, Dutch, Danes and Belgians and about a third of the Germans. The French of all parties were for Strasbourg, as were the Luxembourgers, most Italians, Greeks and Irish.

Work in progress

DOCUMENT	SUBJECT	Main Cttee	Other Cttee
COM(81)137 fin	Proposal for a directive on summertime arrangements	Trans	
	Proposal for a decision on the designation and operation of a liaison laboratory for swine fever*	Agric	Budget
COM(81)143 fin	Proposal for a regulation on prices governing the importation into the Community of fresh lemons from certain Mediterranean countries	Ext	Budget
COM(81)144 fin	Proposal for a regulation on collective projects for the restructuring of vineyards	Agric	
	Amended proposal for a regulation on monetary compensatory amounts	Agric	
COM(81)202 fin	Proposal for a regulation on the conservation and management of fishery resources applying to vessels registered in the Faroe Islands	Agric	
COM(81)212 fin	Proposal for a decision to adopt a programme of research and development in the field of science and technology 1982-1985	Dev	Energy, Env, Budget
COM(81)187 fin	Proposal for a directive on containers of liquids for human consumption	Env	Econ
COM(81)159 fin	Proposal for a directive on labelling, presentation and the advertising of foodstuffs for sale to the customer	Env	
COM(81)175 fin*	Proposal for a directive on the procedures of the Standing Veterinary Committee	Env	
COM(81)169 fin	Proposal for a regulation on the processing of agricultural products from Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States or from overseas territories	Dev	Budget
COM(81)179 fin	Communication on the opening of the Communities' historical archives to the public	Youth	
COM(81)237 fin	Proposal for a directive on taxes for the consumption of manufactured tobacco	Econ	
COM(81)228 fin	Proposals for		
	i) a decision on the fishing arrangements between the EEC and Sweden for 1981		
	ii) a regulation on the conservation and management of fishery resources for vessels flying the Swedish flag	Agric	
COM(81)120 fin*	Proposal for a regulation on the conservation and management of fishery resources for vessels flying the Spanish flag	Agric	
COM(81) 77 fin	Proposal for a regulation on the restructuring of the inshore fishing industry	Agric	Budget
COM(81)107 fin	Proposal for a directive on health problems affecting trade in fresh poultrymeat	Env	
COM(81)127 fin	Proposal for a regulation on the agreement between the EEC and Portugal concerning the implementation of pre-accession aid for Portugal	Budget	
COM(81)101 fin*	Proposal for a decision on mountain and hill farming in certain less-favoured areas (to include certain disaster-stricken communes in Italy)	Agric	Budget
	Proposal for a regulation on the Association Agreement between the EEC and Cyprus	Ext	
COM(81) 95 fin	Proposal on the 1981 economic policy guidelines for Greece	Econ	
COM(81) 84 fin	Proposal for a directive on the annual accounts of banks and other financial institutions	Legal	

* without report

Action taken

At its 4-8 May part-session Parliament voted on 27 reports dealing with Commission proposals.

1. In 19 cases Parliament adopted committee reports which were favourable to Commission proposals:

- Report by Mr Papaefstratiou on programmes for the coordination of agricultural research following the accession of Greece. (110/80)
- Report by Mr von Wogau on procedures for putting goods into free circulation following the accession of Greece. (166/80)
- Report by Mr Dankert on the carrying forward of 1980 appropriations to 1981. (188/81)
- Report by Mr Herman on Commission recommendations on telecommunications. (138/81)
- Report by Mr Schinzel on three proposals on duty-free allowances. (67/81)
- Report by Mr Moreland on the transport of goods by road between Member States. (950/80)
- Report by Sir Frederick Warner on 1981 food aid. (178/81)
- Report by Mr Leonardi on information in the field of technical standards and regulations. (874/80)
- Proposal for a regulation on the conservation and management of fishery resources for vessels flying the Spanish flag. (96/81)
- Proposal for a regulation introducing an accounting system for expenditure on infrastructure in transport by rail, road and inland waterway. (48/81)
- Proposal for a decision adopting a second research programme in the field of medical and public health. (35/81)
- Proposal for a directive on sampling and analysis of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water in the Member States. (40/81)
- Proposal for a decision on the exchange of information on the quality of surface fresh water in the Community. (41/81)
- Proposal for a directive on air quality limit values and guide values for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates. (43/81)

- Proposal for a directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption. (44/81)
- Proposal for a directive on the conservation of wild birds. (47/81)
- Proposals for regulations on a Community tariff quota for bulls, heifers and cows of certain mountain breeds, not intended for slaughter. (940/80)
- Proposal for a directive on the marketing of cereal seed and seed potatoes. (36/81)
- Proposal for a decision on mountain and hill farming and farming in certain less-favoured areas (to include disaster-stricken communes in Italy). (145/81)

2. In five cases Parliament proposed amendments which the Commission did not wish to accept:

- Report by Mr Dido on operations qualifying for a higher rate of intervention by the ESF. (147/81)
- Report by Mr Carossino on weights and other characteristics of road vehicles used for the carriage of goods. (865/80)
- Report by Mr Fuchs on a research and training programme for the EAEC in the field of controlled thermonuclear fusion. (833/80)
- Report by Mr Ghergo on the application of social security schemes. (552/80)
- Report by Mr Papaefstratiou on the guide price for unginned cotton for 1981/82 and the quantity of cotton for which aid is to be granted. (172/81)

3. In three cases the Commission was prepared to accept some of Parliament's amendments:

- Report by Mr Leonardi on Community projects in the field of micro-electronic technology. (137/81)
- Report by Mr Adam on electricity tariff structures. (895/80)
- Report by Mr Beazley on a third action plan (1981-83) in the field of scientific and technical information and documentation. (182/81)

4. The Commission informed Parliament of emergency aid granted to disaster victims since the last part-session, for flood victims in Somalia, flood victims in Dominica, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and communities affected by the events in Cambodia.

1. In 14 cases Parliament adopted committee reports which were favourable to Commission proposals:

- Report by Mr Nyborg on the operation of wheeled agricultural or forestry tractors. (170/81)
- Report by Mr Moreau on the economic policy guidelines for Greece (1981). (248/81)
- Report by Mr Dalsass on a Farm Accountancy Data Network. (171/81)
- Report by Mr Deschamps on the Association Agreement between the EEC and Cyprus. (74/81)
- Report by Mr Friedrich on methods for testing the biodegradability of anionic surfactants. (253/81)
- Report by Mr Lemmer on the conclusion of the Association Agreement between the EEC and Cyprus and the Cooperation Agreements between the EEC and Egypt, Jordan and the Lebanon. (81/81)
- Report by Mr Vandemeulebroucke on the import system in the sheepmeat/goatmeat sector of certain third countries. (259/81)
- Report by Mr Donnez on the mutual recognition of doctors' and nurses' diplomas. (272/81)
- Report by Mr Travaglini on an information and consultation procedure with third countries in the field of transport by rail, road and inland waterway. (183/81)
- Report by Mr Ghergo on the health protection of workers and the general public against micro-wave radiation. (838/80)
- Proposal for a decision on the designation and operation of a swine fever laboratory. (168/81)
- Proposal for a regulation on fresh lemons from certain countries in the Mediterranean Basin. (190/81)
- Proposals on the procedures of the Standing Veterinary Committee. (225/81)

2. In two cases the Commission was prepared to accept some of Parliament's amendments:

- Report by Mr Adam on a machine translation system. (193/81)
- Report by Mr Janssen van Raay on a market observation system for the carriage of goods by rail, road, or inland waterway. (187/81)

3. The Commission also took note of Parliament's opinions on:

- Report by Sir Henry Plumb on possible improvements to the CAP. (250/81)
- Report by Mr Giavazzi on the restructuring of economic and monetary policies. (256/81)
- Report by Mr Pfennig on the future of the EEC budget. (264/81)
- Report by Mr Irmer on the discharge of the budget for 1979. (136/81)
- Report by Mr Kellett-Bowman on the budgetary control of the Joint Research Centre at Ispra. (59/81)
- Report by Mr Kellett-Bowman on the budgetary control of the Computer Centre. (66/81)
- Report by Mr Gabert on Commission controls on the collection of own resources ("Como butter" case). (695/80)
- Report by Mr Dankert on the ninth Financial Report on the EAGGF Guarantee Section. (174/81)
- Report by Mrs Vayssade on the abolition of capital punishment in the EEC. (65/81)
- Resolution on the current economic and monetary situation in the Community.
- Resolution on the recent arrests of Czechoslovak signatories of "Charter 77". (284/81)
- Resolution on the Israeli raid on Tammuz.
- Report by Mr Patterson on the incompatibility of the French artificial insemination monopoly with the Treaty of Rome. (184/81)
- Report by Mrs Martin on the Community's regional policy and Northern Ireland. (177/81)
- Report by Mr Hume on the problem of coastal erosion in the EEC. (830/80)
- Second report by Mr Key on social legislation in the transport sector. (89/81)
- Report by Mr Helms on transport relations with Austria. (186/81)
- Report by Mrs Martin on the Fifth Annual Report (1979) on the ERDF. (181/81)

4. The Commission informed Parliament of emergency aid granted to disaster victims since the last part-session, for refugees from El Salvador in Nicaragua, repair of damage to railways in Zambia, victims of torrential rains in the Comoro Islands.

At its 15-19 June part-session Parliament voted on 16 reports dealing with Commission proposals.

Replies to Members' questions

Tax evasion through tax havens — Bouke Beumer (EPP/NL) WQ 111/81

The Commission itself possesses no quantitative data on the amount of tax avoided by companies and other taxpayers making use of tax havens outside the Community. The Member States do not possess any reliable figures in this field either. Although the Commission takes the view that tax evasion distorts the conditions of competition, it is an economic phenomenon which constitutes neither a restrictive practice nor an abuse of a dominant position and is not, therefore, covered by the Community rules on competition. For direct taxation, Member States have already agreed to mutual assistance in tackling tax evasion.

Less chemicals in food — Frau Ursula Schleicher (EPP/Ger) WQ 8/81

The Commission is sponsoring scientific research and seeking ways of reducing the need for such high levels of chemicals to be used in pest control and as fertilisers in fruit and vegetable agriculture.

More oil — Corentin Calvez (Lib/Fr) WQ 159/81

To date, 20 projects on the development of new, more effective methods of recovering oil have received Community support totalling 29 million EUA. Almost all the projects financed have produced positive results from the technical point of view. So far this year the Commission has received 12 further applications for investment totalling approx. 129 million EUA.

Eviscerated poultry — Pierre-Bernard Cousté (EPD/Fr) WQ 54/81

The Commission is proposing postponing until 15 August 1986 the date by which all marketed poultry meat should be eviscerated. Noting that local sales of poultry in small quantities may be exempt, the Commission adds that it will continue to study whether it is possible to lay down special health provisions for certain types of poultry (e.g. Bresse chickens in France).

EEC-US exchange rate cooperation — Karel Van Miert (Soc/Bel) WQ 2230/80

Community and American monetary authorities have been participating for some time in daily consultations on exchange rates. The Commission is seeking to intensify this cooperation. At a time when the aim is to ensure that economic activity is not unduly slowed down and that real progress can be made in investment, it states, it is more necessary than ever to pursue a number of conditions relating to exchange rates and interest rates. The Monetary Committee and Committee of Governors of the Central Banks are to submit a report on monetary relations between the Community and third countries to the Council of Ministers.

Showmen's vehicles — Robert Moreland (Dem/UK) WQ 184/81

The Commission considers that combinations of showmen's vehicles are not standard vehicles in the sense of its current proposals on the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles. Their dimensions should therefore continue to be fixed by individual Member States, unless it can be shown that significant distortions in the conditions of competition would arise from differences in regulations in these Member States.

Intervention stocks — Lady Elles (Dem/UK) WQ 138/81

The Commission has given the following figures for the quantities in tonnes of agricultural products in public storage in the Community and has indicated the number of days' consumption they represent:

Products	29.2.80		28.2.81	
	'000t.	Days	'000t.	Days
Common wheat	1609	15	4899	44
Barley	74	1	983	10
Rye	554	66	516	62
Durum wheat	143	13	158	14
Skimmed milk	187	34	171	31
Butter	295	64	103	22
Olive oil	59	33	110	62
Colza	20	5	73	16
Beef & veal	273	15	291	16
Tobacco	28	n.a.	33	n.a.

Live animal transport — Michael Welsh (Dem/UK) WQ 43/81

Although proposals for the protection of animals during international transport were presented by the Commission in 1979, discussions within the Council are still continuing — although they are stated to be "progressing favourably".

British postal rates to the Nine — Sir Fred Warner (Dem/UK) WQ 2309/80

Posting a letter or card from one Member State to another costs the same as internally . . . unless you live in Britain. The British government says that rates are a matter for the Post Office alone. The Post Office states that it is not in a position to extend the inland rate to other countries as "it is required to operate on a strictly commercial basis". Like the questioner, the Commission requests that "the United Kingdom is unable to join the other Member States in helping to give their nationals a sense of belonging to a single Community in a way which affects their daily lives."

EDF Health aid — Vera Squarcialupi (Comm/It) WQ 2267/80

Between 1958 and 1980 the European Development Fund financed 198 dispensaries, 66 health centres, 127 hospitals, 75 maternity units and 33 mother-and-child clinics, providing almost 14,000 in-patient beds in all. In addition to these projects, the EDF has financed 11 training establishments

for medical personnel (including two faculties of medicine) and a number of public health, pediatric and other establishments, has supplied equipment, and has funded campaigns to combat major endemic diseases etc. In all, the European Development Fund has financed over 150 health projects in developing countries.

Badgers and tuberculosis — Lord O'Hagan (Dem/UK) WQ 2110/80

From a detailed study in the UK (Zuckerman Report) a definite link has been established between tuberculosis in badgers and cattle. It has been scientifically established for many years that tuberculosis can spread from cattle to humans. The causative organism of tuberculosis has been isolated from badgers in France and the Republic of Ireland but, with the exception of limited areas in the United Kingdom, the Commission is not aware of any systematic control carried out on badgers to prevent the spread of tuberculosis. It is not envisaged that the Commission will take any further steps than those already taken in the field of control and eradication in bovine animals.

Central America — Daniel Percheron (Soc/Fr) WQ 1921/80

The Community and its Member States maintain close political and economic relations with all countries in Central America.

At the economic level, the Community has increasingly close relations with them in financial and technical assistance, food aid, generalized preferences and the promotion of regional integration, e.g. Central American Common Market. Honduras and Nicaragua have received substantial financial assistance, and in 1980 Honduras was considered by the Community as one of the countries to be given priority in the allocation of Community aid. Food aid has been given to Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Nicaragua also received a large amount of emergency aid in 1979.

The Commission intends to step up the Community's contacts with Central America by increasing trade and continuing its development aid, whilst paying particular attention to developments in human rights.

Bookshelf

The European Parliament: What it is; What it does; How it works — Michael Palmer. Pergamon Press. Hardcover £7.95; soft cover £4.50.

Written by a senior official of the European Parliament — who has previously worked for the Council of Europe, Western European Union and the North Atlantic Assembly — this is the first authoritative analysis of the Parliament from its election in June 1979 up to the beginning of 1981 when Greece joined the Community.