


Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2012/2308(INI)	Procedure completed
Location of the seats of the European Union's institutions		
Subject 8.10 Revision of the Treaties, intergovernmental conferences 8.40 Institutions of the Union		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFCO Constitutional Affairs		18/02/2013
		Vers/ALE HÄFNER Gerald	18/02/2013
		ECR FOX Ashley	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		PPE LE GRIP Constance	
		S&D DROUTSAS Dimitrios	
		ALDE ILCHEV Stanimir	
		EFD MESSERSCHMIDT Morten	
		Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion
	BUDG Budgets		26/03/2013
		ALDE PICKART ALVARO Alexander Nuno	
	PETI Petitions		22/01/2013
		ECR CHICHESTER Giles	
European Commission	Commission DG Secretariat-General	Commissioner BARROSO José Manuel	

Key events			
22/11/2012	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
14/10/2013	Vote in committee		
23/10/2013	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0350/2013	Summary
19/11/2013	Debate in Parliament		

20/11/2013	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/11/2013	Decision by Parliament	T7-0498/2013	Summary
20/11/2013	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2012/2308(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFCO/7/11302

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE513.103	06/06/2013	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE514.747	05/07/2013	EP	
Committee opinion	PETI	PE510.780	23/09/2013	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE519.753	26/09/2013	EP	
Committee opinion	BUDG	PE514.622	27/09/2013	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0350/2013	23/10/2013	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0498/2013	20/11/2013	EP	Summary

Location of the seats of the European Union's institutions

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Ashley FOX (ECR, UK) and Gerald HAFNER (Greens/EFA, DE) on the location of the seats of the European Unions Institutions.

It believed that the European Parliament, given that it is the only body directly representing the European citizens, should be granted the prerogative of determining its own working arrangements, including the right to decide where and when it holds its meetings. The current situation is that, in accordance with Article 341 TFEU, Member States have determined the seat of the institutions: Protocol 6 annexed to the Treaties establishes that Parliament shall have its seat in Strasbourg, where 12 periods of monthly plenary sessions including the budget session shall be held, that the periods of additional plenary sessions shall be held in Brussels, that its committees shall meet in Brussels, and that its General Secretariat and its departments shall remain in Luxembourg.

The committee agreed with the principle that the European Parliament would be more effective, cost-efficient and respectful of the environment if it were located in a single place. Members note that the continuation of the monthly migration between Brussels and Strasbourg has amongst most EU citizens become a symbolic, negative issue detrimental to the European Unions reputation, especially at a time when the financial crisis has led to serious and painful expenditure cuts in the Member States.

The report noted that the additional annual costs resulting from the geographic dispersion of Parliament have been estimated to range between EUR 156 million and EUR 204 million, equivalent to approximately 10 % of Parliaments annual budget, while the environmental impact is also significant, with the CO2 emissions associated with the transfers to and from the three working locations estimated to be between 11 000 and 19 000 tonnes.

Treaty revision procedure: Members considered it perfectly legitimate to launch a debate on its right to determine its own working arrangements, including the right to decide where and when it is to meet. Accordingly, they committed themselves to initiating an ordinary treaty revision procedure under Article 48 TEU with a view to proposing the changes to Article 341 TFEU and Protocol 6 necessary to allow Parliament to decide on the location of its seat and its internal organisation.

They also called on the Parliament not to make any recommendations regarding the seats of the other EU institutions.

The committee asked the Court of Auditors, or a similar independent agency, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential savings for the EU budget if Parliament had Brussels as its only seat. This analysis should include budgetary aspects and ancillary costs such as savings made through reduced loss of working time and greater efficiency. Furthermore, the committee asked the Bureau to commission Eurobarometer, or a similar professional polling service, to conduct, by 1 January 2014, a survey of the European citizens views on the

prospect of maintaining Parliaments three places of work, with specific reference to the financial, environmental and efficiency costs of this arrangement.

Lastly, Members acknowledged that any future decision by Parliament on its working arrangements must allow sufficient time for debate and reflection, as well as for an orderly transition.

Location of the seats of the European Union's institutions

The European Parliament adopted by 483 votes to 141, with 34 abstentions, a resolution on the location of the seats of the European Unions Institutions.

It recalled that Article 341 TFEU establishes that the seats of the institutions of the Union shall be determined by common accord of the governments of the Member States and that the European Parliament, given that it is the only body directly representing the European citizens, should be granted the prerogative of determining its own working arrangements, including the right to decide where and when it holds its meetings.

The current situation is that, in accordance with Article 341 TFEU, Member States have determined the seat of the institutions: Protocol 6 annexed to the Treaties establishes that Parliament shall have its seat in Strasbourg, where 12 periods of monthly plenary sessions including the budget session shall be held, that the periods of additional plenary sessions shall be held in Brussels, that its committees shall meet in Brussels, and that its General Secretariat and its departments shall remain in Luxembourg.

It also recalled that the EU citizens (more than one million have endorsed the One Seat campaign petition) are continuing to express their discontentment with the current situation.

Parliament agreed with the principle that the European Parliament would be more effective, cost-efficient and respectful of the environment if it were located in a single place. It noted that the continuation of the monthly migration between Brussels and Strasbourg has amongst most EU citizens become a symbolic, negative issue detrimental to the European Unions reputation, especially at a time when the financial crisis has led to serious and painful expenditure cuts in the Member States.

It noted also that the additional annual costs resulting from the geographic dispersion of Parliament have been estimated to range between EUR 156 million and EUR 204 million, equivalent to approximately 10 % of Parliaments annual budget, while the environmental impact is also significant, with the CO2 emissions associated with the transfers to and from the three working locations estimated to be between 11 000 and 19 000 tonnes.

Treaty revision procedure: Parliament considered it perfectly legitimate to launch a debate on its right to determine its own working arrangements, including the right to decide where and when it is to meet. Accordingly, it committed themselves to initiating an ordinary treaty revision procedure under Article 48 TEU with a view to proposing the changes to Article 341 TFEU and Protocol 6 necessary to allow Parliament to decide on the location of its seat and its internal organisation.

It stated that it shall not make any recommendations regarding the seats of the other EU institutions.

Parliament asked the Court of Auditors, or a similar independent agency, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential savings for the EU budget if Parliament had Brussels as its only seat. This analysis should include budgetary aspects and ancillary costs such as savings made through reduced loss of working time and greater efficiency. Furthermore, it asked the Bureau to commission Eurobarometer, or a similar professional polling service, to conduct, by 1 January 2014, a survey of the European citizens views on the prospect of maintaining Parliaments three places of work, with specific reference to the financial, environmental and efficiency costs of this arrangement.

Unresolved questions: in addition to the issue of the location of seats, there are other essential matters directly related to Parliaments status and its function within the EU institutional machinery, and on those points convincing solutions have yet to be found. These issues pertain to:

- electoral law,
- rules for a no-protest zone,
- immunity matters,
- points related to the Statute for Members.

According to the Parliament, attending to these should either be encompassed within Parliaments right of organisational self-determination, exercised in the form of a general decision-making power, or, at the very least, be brought within the scope of the ordinary legislative procedure based on codecision.

Lastly, the resolution acknowledged that any future decision by Parliament on its working arrangements must allow sufficient time for debate and reflection, as well as for an orderly transition.