

CONFIDENTIAL

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

EHG(L2)(80)14

COPY NO 1

18 November 1980

EUROPEAN COUNCIL, LUXEMBOURG  
1/2 DECEMBER 1980

---

SEAT OF INSTITUTIONS

---

Brief by Foreign and Commonwealth Office

OBJECTIVE

1. Avoid any substantive discussion; remit discussion to conference of Member States.

POINTS TO MAKE

2. Agree Treaty provides for definitive decision. Should try to end waste of time, money and energy caused by present arrangements.

3. Discussion should be taken up in conference of Member States. Decision is for Member States to take by common accord.

4. It would lead to unnecessary confrontation for decision to be simply imposed. Parliament's view should be sought now, even though it is for us alone (Member States) to decide.

BACKGROUND

4. The Treaty (Article 216) lays down that the seat of the institutions shall be determined by common accord of the Member States. This has never been done and the present arrangements under which the Parliament meets in Strasbourg and Luxembourg, and its Committee meet in Brussels, is provisional.

CONFIDENTIAL

/5. The

**CONFIDENTIAL**

5. The Parliament has been becoming increasingly restive with these arrangements which are undoubtedly expensive, inefficient and inconvenient for MEPs. It was probably to pre-empt any move by the Parliament itself to change its arrangements to the disadvantage of Strasbourg that, on 16 September the French Government circulated a memorandum calling on Member States to enter into discussion without delay on fixing the seat of the Institutions. A conference of Member States, consisting of Permanent Representatives in Brussels has now been set up. The stated French aim is to establish Strasbourg as the Parliamentary capital of the Community, with Brussels the executive capital and Luxembourg the judicial/financial capital.

6. The French are therefore demandeurs. UK Ministers have previously agreed that our longer-term aim should be to see the Parliament located in Brussels but that we should play this long and avoid taking the initiative. We are considering further what our aims should be in the discussion which has now begun, but it remains desirable that we should not get in the lead on this subject and there should be no need to do so at the European Council.

7. The Dutch have proposed that the Parliament should be consulted before a decision is taken on its site. By supporting this suggestion, which is entirely reasonable in itself and will be welcomed by the Parliament, we shall gain time in the conference while the French decide whether to allow consultation, which would probably result in an opinion favouring Brussels, or to block it.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

18 November 1980

2.

**CONFIDENTIAL**