

'The Parliament inaugurates its new headquarters' from Tribune pour l'Europe (July-August 1999)

Caption: In July 1999, the European Parliament holds its first session since its election in June 1999 in its new buildings in Strasbourg.

Source: Tribune pour l'Europe. Informations du Parlement européen. Juillet-Août 1999, n° 7-8. [s.l.]. ISSN 0255 - 8815. "Le Parlement inaugure ses nouveaux locaux", p. 1.

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Parliament inaugurates its new headquarters

The first part-session of the European Parliament elected last June coincided with the inauguration of its new buildings in Strasbourg. The seat of the European Parliament was fixed in Strasbourg, where it holds twelve part-sessions a year, at the Edinburgh Summit in December 1992. The other places of work are Brussels (supplementary part-sessions as well as political group and parliamentary committee meetings) and Luxembourg (Secretariat). The decisions of the Edinburgh Summit were confirmed by the Member States in a protocol annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam in October 1997.

Until the inauguration of its new headquarters, the European Parliament rented the Chamber and the conference rooms belonging to the Council of Europe. The Council, in need of more room for its own activities, gradually took back its offices from the European Parliament.

The new building is the result of an architectural competition launched in 1991. It is composed of a building that follows the curve of the river (the building that contains the Chamber) and an adjacent high-rise building.

This new building, which is said to have cost 2 776 million French francs, is built on a site of more than four hectares and includes a surface area of nearly 190 000 m². The high-rise building is 60 metres high and 100 metres across. The complex includes 1 133 offices and 38 conference rooms. The Chamber was designed with future enlargements in mind and has 750 seats as well as a gallery which can accommodate 330 visitors.

The new European Parliament also wishes to be seen as largely symbolic. Accordingly, the use of glass surfaces symbolises the transparency of Parliament towards its voters, and the high-rise building, with its deliberately unfinished appearance, is meant to be a symbol of European integration which is not yet complete.