

‘France fights to keep Strasbourg as a seat of the European institutions’  
from El País (16 September 1987)


**Caption:** Published in the Spanish daily newspaper El País on 16 September 1987, this article reflects the concern of the French authorities that Strasbourg remain the seat of the European Parliament in view of initiatives carried out by MEPs in favour of Brussels, and even by some members of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly in favour of Luxembourg.

**Source:** El País. 16.09.1987. Madrid. "Francia lucha por defender Estrasburgo como sede europea",  
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## France fights to keep Strasbourg as a seat of the European institutions

### Chirac says that the matter is not negotiable

Strasbourg

Ignacio Cembrero, Special Correspondent. French politicians have joined forces to ensure that Strasbourg remains the seat of European institutions such as the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. The climax of the battle was probably reached on Monday night when Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, speaking to an audience of 2 000 people, read a message from the French President, François Mitterrand, stating that 'Strasbourg is not negotiable.'

The meeting was called by the International Association for Strengthening the European Role of Strasbourg, whose 15 000 members include a former President of the Republic, the Speakers of both Chambers of Parliament, all the former Heads of Government, 16 ministers and 40 former ministers belonging to all political parties except the Communist Party and the far-right Front National. The European Parliament has three seats — Strasbourg for its part-sessions, Luxembourg for its Secretariat and Brussels for its committee meetings — but two years ago it adopted a resolution calling for the construction of a 600-seat Chamber in Brussels, which a British–Belgian firm will be starting to build this autumn.

The French authorities have lodged an appeal against this resolution with the Court of Justice of the EC. They are also worried by the repeated wish of the President of the Parliament, Lord Henry Plumb, to 'have a single seat in future, wherever it may be.'

### Unanimity required

The transfer of the seat of an institution requires a unanimous decision of the 12 Member States, but, from a legal point of view, there is nothing to prevent the Members of the European Parliament from agreeing to hold all their annual part-sessions in Brussels except for one in Strasbourg, thereby formally complying with the provisions of the treaties.

'Who will prevent a Parliament elected by universal suffrage from meeting several times a year in Brussels?' asks Jean-Marie Caro, the centrist deputy who founded the Association for the Defence of Strasbourg. He suspects that Danish, UK, Belgian and Dutch MEPs will soon propose such an arrangement, invoking the need to save money and to monitor the work of the European Commission more closely.

Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which is composed of representatives of 21 democratic European countries, are already moving in that direction. On 1 October, 12 of them will be tabling a resolution calling for plenary sessions to be held in Luxembourg and committee meetings in other cities.

Their resolution is motivated by the 'vexatious discriminatory measures' imposed by France, which, for a year now, has been requiring citizens of non-EC European countries other than Switzerland to obtain visas.

### Approval likely

The resolution is likely to secure the relative majority required for approval, although that will not mean that the Assembly will be transferred immediately.

In addition to political mobilisation, the French authorities are prepared to come up with more cash in order to keep the European institutions in Alsace.

The Strasbourg City Council has allocated the equivalent of 300 million pesetas to improving the facilities for visitors from abroad, and a further 560 million will be spent on expanding the small airport at Entzheim.

The Mayor and his Councillors also hope that the French Government will decide to build a Chamber for the European Parliament so that it will no longer have to share its seat with the Council of Europe.

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