

Open letter of the European Association for Young Entrepreneurs to European  
Parliamentarians

## **Strasbourg, the capital of European democracy**

Dear European Parliamentarians,

On March 9, 2011, you voted for the merger of two out of the twelve plenary sessions of the European Parliament in Strasbourg into one week, for the 2012/2013 timetable. This amendment, brought forward by a British Parliamentarian, de facto reduces the number of sessions held, to eleven.

This decision has a symbolic impact. The history of European integration is marked by the geographic diversity of its institutions sites, symbol of a unique democratic and cultural wealth. In this context, the European parliament benefits from its three- locations in Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxemburg. This particular organization is now brought into question. Behind this vote, the will of a minority, but a determined one, is reappearing. It is the will to challenge the legitimacy of Strasbourg as a site for the European parliament's headquarters. A will which hides, for some, a declared hostility towards European integration.

Resulting from an unanimous agreement among member states in 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam provides that « *The European Parliament shall have its seat in Strasbourg where the 12 periods of monthly plenary sessions, including the budget session, shall be held* ». The intent to change this provision would require a revision of the treaties, and thus, an unanimous agreement between the twenty-seven member states, implying a long negotiation process and an uncertain outcome.

If Europeans have the right to be informed about the possibility to combine all parliamentary activities in a unique headquarters site, the report of MEP Mc Millan Scott, « *A tale of two Cities* », which recently received the official support of the British government, does not inscribe itself in an objective approach. This report is based on a survey whose sole objective is to demonstrate the assets of the grouping of all European parliament services in Brussels, and the current situation's inconveniences, under the seal of a bad faith, Euro-sceptic, and biased approach.

Thus, the author of this report, presented as an independent consultant, in fact being a former MEP, was the source of an earlier campaign called « *Single Seat in Brussels* ». The advantages of the current situation are never considered in this report; contributing to make of this document not an item for discussion, but a tool for political propaganda.

The European Association for Young Entrepreneurs (AEJE), committed to the values of the European Union and their promotion, wishes to initiate an objective and open debate on the question of the seat of the European Parliament. The debate has to respect the fundamental principles of contradictory discussions, ignored so far by the study of Mc Millan- Scott. Therefore the many benefits of Strasbourg have to be taken into consideration in this debate.

This city is indeed, both the European democratic capital, where the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is holding meetings since 1949, and the capital of Human Rights, as the seat of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. The identity and the voice of the European Parliament are therefore more recognized and respected in Strasbourg than in Brussels.

The AEJE wants to pursue and develop this initiative dictated by the promotion of the European spirit. It will soon issue a note presenting the strengths and weaknesses of the actual situation, the possibilities for evolution, and their implications.

Dear European Parliamentarians, the story of the European integration is the story of nations who helped each other over and across the borders. It is our duty to honor this collective purpose and to decide together on the future of our institutions.

The European union forged itself in diversity. Therefore the geographical diversity of its institutions remains one of the most representative symbol of this particular and unique history.