

Real estate policy of the EP - The Brussels headquarters

The first thing I did was to set out parliament's needs because it made no sense, if we could meet in Brussels for three weeks and in Strasbourg for one, not to be able to hold plenary sessions in Brussels too. I put forward an agreement that struck a balance between parliament's three places of work, bearing in mind that in those days almost 90% of its officials were based in Luxembourg. I secured the agreement of the Bureau, including the French vice-presidents, which led to the construction of the new building in Strasbourg, to improve the functionality of our work.

This was a sensitive issue, to the point that members of the sensational press, mainly German, for some reason, as well as French, levied unveiled and even explicit accusations of corruption against me, sometimes expressed in rather xenophobic language. So what I did was to sign at the end of the week before – I believe it was a Friday – before my departure, on 14 January 1992. And I knew exactly what I was doing because there had been enough debate and discussion, mainly with the French government. I have to say that this is what cooled relations between President Mitterrand and myself.

We could say that parliament's responsibility is to look to the future; to be able to respond as effectively as possible to the requirements of democracy. I spelled this out very clearly. I said that I was prepared to convene parliament in a field.