

The workplaces of the European Parliament

My predecessor had started the construction of a Parliament building in Brussels for specific matters. From the outset this met with resistance from the French government. But it was started. One of my first official duties was that I had to overrule the financial controller's objection, because my predecessor had not dared to do so.

Then there was also the question of the construction of the new Parliament building in Strasbourg. Because, if the number of MEPs increased — as it seemed bound to do — the existing building would be too small. The building in Brussels already catered for more MEPs. I did have the task, in the face of resistance first and foremost from the British, who wanted to transfer Strasbourg to Brussels altogether, of ensuring that the Strasbourg building was completed.

I must now add, quite frankly: I also took the view that it was important to have the plenary in Strasbourg. Because the Council and the Commission had to go there every Wednesday to give reports. And the Parliament could discuss them directly. This was an excellent opportunity to make the Parliament visible to the public, as everything else was after all in Brussels - from NATO and the WEU to the Commission and Council headquarters — and so raise Strasbourg's profile.

The workplace of the European Ombudsman

Under no circumstances did France and Luxembourg want to let Brussels become the capital of Europe. So the question was where the seat of this new institution, the Ombudsman, should be. In the end the conclusion was reached that it would have to be Strasbourg, otherwise it wouldn't be possible to get everyone's consent. And so that's what happened. That's why this dispute was in fact more of a formality than anything else.