

## Brussels-Strasbourg Study

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### **MEPs vow to take on France over Strasbourg seat: top law firm offers pro bono support**

A cross-party group of MEPs campaigning to end the European Parliament's controversial two-seat arrangement has said it will oppose attempts by the French government to overturn the Parliament's recent decision to reduce the number of times Members and officials have to travel to Strasbourg every year and a major international law firm has offered them its professional support.

The French government announced on 18 May that it had filed an official complaint with the European Court of Justice against the decision by the European Parliament, taken on 9 March and approved by 357 votes in favour of the move, with 253 against and 40 abstentions, to hold two full parliamentary sessions during the same October week in 2012 and 2013.

A report published by the [Brussels-Strasbourg Seat Study Group](#) of senior MEPs in February found that the additional cost of meeting monthly for four days in Strasbourg is €180 million and 19,000 tonnes of CO2 each year.

Under EU law individuals cannot intervene in Court cases between member states and EU Institutions, but the MEPs say they want to persuade other EU member states to support the Parliament. The Dutch and UK coalition government agreements both support a single seat for the European Parliament in Brussels and have publicly backed the MEPs' decision.

**The MEPs are also calling on the French government to make public the text of their complaint - so far kept secret - to allow voters to see the arguments they are using to oppose the Parliament's democratic decision.**

Sidley Austin LLP, an international law firm with approximately 1,700 lawyers worldwide and substantial experience in the European Court of Justice, has offered the MEPs its services on a pro bono basis and will be advising the group in the case.

Edward McMillan-Scott, (LibDem, UK), Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for democracy and human rights and chairman of the Brussels-Strasbourg Seat Study Group, said: "I am delighted that we have solid legal advice as this case goes forward. Sidley Austin will be rendering a great service to us in our fight for the European taxpayer and to the cause of democracy within the EU."

Alexander Alvaro, German Liberal MEP and chairman of the OneSeat campaign says "The EP should have the autonomy to decide its own working arrangements. It is time for the Council to honour the will of the only democratically elected EU institution. It is taxpayers' money being spent every time the EP moves between Brussels and Strasbourg. These taxpayers have an interest in open discussions, not secret court documents."

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