



Resolution 1357 (2004)¹

Realising Strasbourg's potential as a European capital

Parliamentary Assembly

1. For over half a century, the city of Strasbourg has served as a political capital of Europe in the most profound meaning of the term, in its capacity as home to the pan-European Council of Europe with its Court of Human Rights, and to the European Parliament. The city has in this way made a substantial contribution to the flourishing of a democratic, humanistic, socially just and law-based Europe and it continues to be vital to the continent's future.

2. For Strasbourg to be able to pursue this function, however, the city urgently needs to benefit from a new, more forward-looking and dynamic approach to its development on the part of France in its capacity as host country to these European institutions and to other interested parties, in the form of vastly improved air and fast train links between Strasbourg and major European cities. This would permit better access to the European institutions for ministers, parliamentarians and experts and improved educational and cultural facilities to attract those called upon to participate in the construction of a united Europe. The Parliamentary Assembly is aware of the major investments required by France to achieve this but would also draw attention to the substantial economic and other benefits derived by France from the presence of European institutions on its territory and to the gains to be made by the region in its efforts to attract international investment and employment.

3. The Assembly welcomes certain developments, such as the appointment by the French Government of a special steering committee, "Strasbourg capitale européenne"; the creation of a "Eurodistrict" consisting of Strasbourg and its German neighbouring town Kehl across the Rhine as well as nearby municipalities; and the solemn commitment entered into at the French-German Summit of September 2003 with regard to completing a fast train TGV Est link between, in a first stage, Paris and Metz by 2007, and all the way to Strasbourg as soon as possible thereafter, including a new rail bridge across the Rhine connecting the French TGV system with ICE, its German counterpart connecting Strasbourg with Frankfurt. The Assembly welcomes the confirmation by the French interministerial committee on planning and urban development (CIADT) on 18 December 2003 that the second stage of the fast train TGV Est link will be carried out and encourages France to start the work as soon as the first stage is completed, that is, in 2007.

4. Fast train links are also needed from Paris via Strasbourg with Stuttgart, Munich, Budapest and Vienna through the so-called "Magistrale" project and south via a Rhine-Rhone TGV link. The Assembly recommends that all these connections be considered as priority projects in the new infrastructure investment plan currently under consideration within the European Union. The Assembly welcomes the decision to go ahead with construction of the Rhine-Rhone fast train (TGV) link, made at the meeting of the CIADT on 18 December 2003.

5. Of even greater importance are improved air links, if necessary with French public support, with other European cities. The Assembly in this context regrets the cessation of the Ryanair connection between London and Strasbourg and refers to Assembly [Resolution 1341 \(2003\)](#) on European air transport policies: crucial choices at a critical time, in which it states that "the arrival of these new carriers presents advantages for travellers who now have access to air transport at a modest price" while cautioning that "this should not, however, be detrimental to either social regulations or security".

1. Assembly debate on 26 January 2004 (1st Sitting) (see [Doc.10023](#), report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr Schreiner). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 January 2004 (1st Sitting).



6. For Strasbourg to develop, educational facilities catering for the children of diplomats, civil servants, company heads and executives, who, increasingly, are English-speaking, must also be established. The Assembly considers that the organisation of special sections within a state secondary school is not sufficient to meet needs. It sees the recent establishment, as a result of a private initiative, of an international school offering a complete curriculum in English to younger children as a welcome first step in the right direction. It would point out, however, that at this stage the school provides only primary education. It regrets that the French Government has not provided financial support for this initiative or pursued the idea of a European school, particularly with the creation of a "Eurodistrict", in order to make it possible for the various levels of education to be included and for the school to have the European status that seems essential. If the European institutions are to be able to attract high quality diplomats and civil servants, more needs to be done to provide educational facilities in Strasbourg for their children at the various levels, up to university level. The French Government's recent decision confirming that the Ecole nationale d'administration (ENA) will be based in Strasbourg and adding a European dimension to the education it provides is certainly proof of Strasbourg's growing awareness of the importance of Europe. France, as the host country, should make a greater effort to become involved by supporting the regional and local authorities' efforts to meet this challenge.

7. The Assembly appreciates the quality of life in Strasbourg and the surrounding region, which also hosts high quality cultural events. In order to enhance the influence of this European capital, however, it is necessary to broaden the range of cultural events on offer. This could be done by strengthening co-operation with neighbouring towns in the region, in Germany and in Switzerland, but here again firmer support from the French Government would probably be needed.

8. The Assembly:

8.1. calls on the French Government to promptly take the policy decisions required to remedy the situation and enable Strasbourg to fulfil its European vocation to the full on a lasting basis;

8.2. requests the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to monitor the implementation of this resolution and to report to the Assembly on progress achieved;

8.3. resolves to raise this matter at a forthcoming meeting of the Joint Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe