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Single seat for the European Parliament

Time to break the taboo

The long-running question of the European Parliament's multi-seat operation is again brought into focus this week, as the EP packs two Strasbourg plenary sessions into one week. The Greens/EFA group backed this innovative solution to making the EP's operating method less inefficient and wasteful operating from the outset.

While this calendar solution may yet be struck down by the Court, the move has ensured the EP's seat situation - and the monthly Strasbourg sessions - is again on the agenda.

The Greens/EFA group has long been in favour of a single seat for the European Parliament. This would not only reduce the additional cost of the multi-seat operation (estimated at around €200 million per year), it would also tackle the avoidable environmental damaged arising from the EP's travelling circus, which the Greens brought into focus in 2007. Thousands of officials and politicians travelling to-and-fro once a month clearly causes both economic waste and environmental damage.

In spite of the continued attempts by EU governments in Council and the EP's two largest political groups to pretend otherwise, the opposition to the EP travelling circus continues to gain momentum. As a result of the significant and avoidable cost and waste involved, it has come to symbolise all that is wrong with the EU for a large section of the public.

While ultimately, it is EU governments alone that have the power to decide to scrap this senseless operating arrangement, the European Parliament should do its part by debating the matter. With a large majority of MEPs opposed to the multi-seat operation, this would be important for ensuring the issue is on the agenda of EU governments.

Unfortunately, the two largest political groups (the EPP and S&D groups) have a long track record of blocking any such debate in the democratically-elected European Parliament.

The Greens continue to push to have the issue debated in the EP plenary and will do so again this week at the EP's Conference of Presidents.

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