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Greening the European Parliament

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The EU is staking its claim to be the leader in the global fight against climate change and the European Parliament is at the heart of policies to this end, with a temporary committee on climate change being constituted to assist to the EP in this regard.

The European Parliament is well positioned to set an example in terms of limiting the negative impact it has on the climate.

The very nature of this house - with 785 MEPs from 27 Member States, around 3000 staff, operating bases in three different countries and a considerable number of annual international delegations - means it clearly has a sizeable impact on the environment.

The EP has already taken baby steps towards improving its environmental impact through its Environmental Management Scheme (EMAS), although unfortunately the EP's EMAS plan was a lot less ambitious than it could have been - both in terms of budget and scope. **There is considerable scope for improvement**, as made clear in the report 'For a more (energy) efficient parliament', which formed part of Monica Frassonni's campaign for the EP Presidency.

The political will for action is there: **an overwhelming majority of MEPs voted in favour of a 'carbon-free' European Parliament** (Morgan report), while the current president has stated the need to take "urgent action" on climate change.

In this paper, we set out a few practical, concrete measures, which the European Parliament could take - both in the short-term and solutions that will be less instantaneous - to improve its environmental impact. This should feed into the work of the EP's working group on internal reform. However, perhaps the most glaring area for improvement in terms of environmental performance is the situation regarding the different seats of the parliament. **While this is ultimately the prerogative of the Member States to resolve, the very least the European Parliament should do is to hold a debate on the Strasbourg seat.**

If the EU is to be taken seriously as a leader in the climate battle, it is crucial that its own institutions can set an example as model performers.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Three simple measures the EP could introduce without delay to improve its environmental performance. The Greens urge the President of the European Parliament to commit to delivering on these measures by 'Green Week' this year (12-15 June 2007).

(1) Instant electricity savings

There is considerable electricity wastage in the EP - through inefficient use of lighting, electrical equipment and air conditioning to list just a few examples. This unnecessarily high electricity consumption not only creates thousands of tonnes of excess CO2 emissions but also results in significant extra costs: the annual electricity bill for the EP in Brussels is 6.2 million.

Some immediate steps that could be taken include:

- Defining **a policy for air conditioning**, under which a limited temperature spread would be set (in Japan, for example, no air-con is allowed to go below 25 degrees)
- Implementing an intensive awareness raising campaign (and, where necessary, training) on **efficient use of lighting and electronic equipment**. Every light and computer that is left on overnight wastes electricity: maintenance or cleaning staff should be encouraged to turn off lights; computers should be programmed to shut down after prolonged idle time (the EP can centrally turn on all PCs but not turn them off).

The Parliament should also commission an expert study to identify all the areas in which its energy efficiency could be maximised. Other best practise examples show that this could reduce electricity consumption by 20%.

(2) Soft mobility now

The European Parliament should devise a soft mobility strategy without delay to encourage **much greater use of public transport, cycling and walking**. One element of this could be to negotiate soft mobility agreements with the authorities in its three main places of operation (Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg) to include greater access to biking facilities but also incentivised access to public transport (reduced fares or free). Any additional expenditure would be more recouped by phasing out the considerable reimbursement schemes for transport by taxis and private cars.

At present, the 3000 staff have access to 45 bicycles in Strasbourg and 30 in Brussels. This is a major shortcoming, particularly for Strasbourg, which is a particularly bicycle-friendly city.

(3) Cutting unnecessary travel to meetings by embracing new technologies

Enhanced use of audio- and video-conferencing is something that could be easily delivered on and would dramatically reduce the need for staff to travel between the three places of operation of the EP. Under an emergency plan developed by the EP, it was foreseen that Strasbourg plenary sessions could run with 1000 less staff on site - so it is clearly possible. The European Commission has contracted a telecoms operator to provide much greater facilities for 'virtual meetings', the EP must follow suit.

The numerous annual delegations of European Parliament across the globe could also be brought in check. The use of video-conferencing for many of these delegations could be considered to reduce unnecessary travel. In addition, the parliament should devise a 'model delegation plan' - using two forthcoming delegations as prototypes - to try and eliminate unnecessary delegation travel. This could then be mainstreamed for the next parliamentary term.

TOMORROW'S PARLIAMENT

There are other crucial measures which should be introduced but which will take slightly more time to roll out for contractual reasons or because of longer planning periods.

(1) 100% Green energy for the EP on all sites

Amazingly, despite the prominent role played by the parliament in pushing for EU renewables targets, **not a single kWh of the EP's electricity comes from renewable energy sources.**

We urge the EP President to ensure that from 1 January 2008 at least 50% of EPs green electricity comes from renewable energy sources and that **from 1 January 2009 100% of the EP will be run fully on renewable electricity.** By launching an EU-wide call for tender for electricity providers this would be easily realisable (since market liberalisation, large clients can source their electricity from non-national providers). The EP should also look into the possibility of generating its own energy, perhaps through investing in solar panels and cells for its ample roof space.

A similar plan could be developed to source bio-gas to meet the EP's needs.

(2) Replacing the gas-guzzlers

At a time when the EU is proposing strict targets for car emissions, **the EP's car fleet is not exactly a model to follow**. Its limousines and buses churn out an average 216g/km, including a Citroën C8 (275g/km) and a BMW (271g/km) used by political group leaders.

As many cars on the EP fleet as possible should be replaced by hybrid cars. Hybrid cars are specifically designed to maximise efficiency for stop and go urban traffic - given 90% of the distances of the parliament's car service are within a range of 5 to 7 km, hybrid cars are clearly the best option. The EP should also try and improve the coordination of transport between airports and train stations, so more use could be made of shuttle buses - eliminating the need for single member car journeys.

The objective should be to meet the target of 120gr/km by 2009.

(3) Renovating of all non-energy efficient buildings of the EP

All existing buildings should undergo a detailed energy audit with a concrete plan for investing in upgrading of the energy-efficiency and the planning of all new buildings should be revisited to look for further improvements (notably the Luxembourg EP building).

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