



## Eco-management also applies to Parliament

**Popular wisdom has it that you should clean up your own back yard first. Thus today's signing of the "European Parliament Environmental Statement" by Parliament's President, Josep Borrell, and Secretary General Julian Priestley represents an undertaking to step up Parliament's efforts to be as eco-friendly as possible in terms of managing its own activities and facilities.**

Parliament currently employs more than 5000 civil servants in its three workplaces in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. It occupies more than 900,000m<sup>2</sup> of office space and uses over 800 tons of paper each year. On top of that, its annual electricity bill comes to around 6 million euros. As Parliament is heavily involved in environmental legislation, it is a matter of applying the principles that it champions to its own "housekeeping".

Parliament certainly hasn't waited until the start of 2006 to make its own new year resolutions. For several years measures have been taken to make savings through reducing paper consumption and energy use, by sorting waste material and by using videoconferencing as a way of cutting down on travel. However, today's signing of the Environmental Statement marks the formal start of a proper long-term and structured internal policy which aims to meet European standards contained within EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme).

During 2006, the text, along with the whole of the European Parliament's new environmental management system, will be subjected to an external audit aimed at getting the system officially registered within the context of EMAS's rules and regulations.

EMAS is a management tool that was devised by the European Union in the 1990s. Initially aimed at industry, the scheme was widened in 2001 to cover all sectors of activity (including public administration) to enable them to assess and improve their environmental performance and to obtain EMAS registration (along with a logo which demonstrates that they are meeting best practice standards). The European Parliament set to work on this task in 2001 by first of all assessing the environmental impact of its own activities and then by setting itself targets. Finally, in December 2005, its Bureau approved an environmental management programme (supported by a small internal management set-up). Following validation of the programme by an external audit, the aim is to get EMAS registration for Parliament by the end of 2006.

In the formal text signed on Tuesday, President Borrell said, "The European Parliament is proud of the commitment to the goals of sustainable development and sound environmental policy that it has shown by its contribution to the law-making process in the European Union. Now the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme offers us the opportunity to show our solidarity with these objectives in a practical way. This Environmental Statement is an expression of the European Parliament's will to ensure that its activities

are consistent with best current practice in environmental management and cause a minimum of harm to the environment."