EMAS in the European Parliament
A quiet success story

The European Union (EU) Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a voluntary management instrument for companies and other organisations wanting to evaluate, report and continuously improve their environmental performance. In 2007, as part of its commitment to making a long-term contribution to sustainable development, the European Parliament became one of the few EU institutions and the first parliament in the EU to obtain EMAS certification. Through its environmental management system it is able to track progress towards targets with regard to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and waste, promoting the efficient use of energy, water and paper, and incorporating environmental guidelines into procurement procedures.

Concerted efforts have resulted in achieving or exceeding several of the targets set in 2017. The targets were revised accordingly: on 16 December 2019, the Parliament’s Bureau adopted a decision setting new targets to be achieved by the end of the ninth legislature.

This document details the Parliament’s progress to date in meeting its targets in all of the above-mentioned areas, and maps out its ambitions for the future.

Progress towards achieving the Parliament’s main EMAS targets
The European Parliament’s EMAS key performance indicators by sector

The European Parliament’s environmental performance is calculated on the basis of ‘full-time equivalent’, or FTE. One FTE is equivalent to one employee working full-time.

The Parliament’s carbon footprint scope covers seven areas: energy consumption; leakage of refrigerant gases; freight; transport of persons; supply of equipment and services; direct waste; and fixed assets. This is the broadest possible scope according to the ISO classification, and it contains all direct, semi-direct and indirect emissions caused by the Parliament’s activities.

Parliament is approaching its 2024 target. The sizeable reduction in carbon emissions already achieved since 2006 has been mainly due to:

- 100 % ‘green’ electricity in the three places of work;
- improved energy efficiency of technical installations (heat pumps, cooling systems, etc.);
- use of high-speed trains instead of charter flights between Brussels and Strasbourg;
- mobility projects, such as co-financing staff’s public transport costs;
- gradual increase in the number of parking places and charging stations for e-cars;
- continuous renewal of the car fleet, including through the purchase of electric vehicles and hybrid cars (15 fully electric cars and 62 hybrid cars in 2019), as well as the continuous extension of the bicycle fleet and the introduction of e-bikes;
- occasional teleworking, which has led to 24,300 days teleworked by staff in 2019. In addition to other beneficial effects, this has resulted in an 112 tonne reduction in Parliament’s CO₂ emissions;
- videoconferencing, which has made it possible to hold 12,356 virtual meetings in 2019; furthermore, the launch of the WebMeeting tool in 2020 makes it possible to join a meeting from any kind of device from both inside and outside the Parliament;
- increased use of economy class for travel by Members.

The Parliament’s absolute carbon emissions in 2019, according to the defined scope for the target, stood at 110,902 t CO₂ eq. Its total carbon footprint, including emissions from non-subsidised visitor groups, which are not taken into account for the emission reduction target, was 162,537 t CO₂ eq.

Since 2016, the Parliament has been offsetting all of its irreducible carbon emissions, making it the only 100 % carbon-neutral EU institution. In particular, the Parliament has decided to:

- offset the total amount of its carbon emissions, including from flights by MEPs between their country of origin and Brussels and Strasbourg, on an annual basis, limited to the financial means available;
- allow for projects in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP-countries), or, if such projects are not available, allow for projects that have been drawn up either by countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as part of their national action plans, or by countries members of the Euro-
Mediterranean Partnership (EuroMed)/Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), by candidate countries or by EU Member States;
- specify the widely recognised Gold Standard as a quality standard for offsetting projects in developing countries.

Since 2019, the Parliament has been offsetting its irreducible carbon emissions jointly with the European Central Bank, in accordance with the above-mentioned conditions. Other institutions will start participating in the joint offsetting approach as of 2020.

Consumption of gas, heating oil, and district heating per FTE was reduced by 22.5% from 2012 to 2019. A strong performance with respect to energy savings for heating has generally been maintained over the years, reflecting the success of both active (heating systems) and passive (thermal insulation) energy efficiency measures taken over time.

The European Parliament is well on the way to achieving its target of reducing its electricity consumption by 20% from 2012 to 2024. A number of energy-saving projects have helped in this regard:
- Installing more energy-efficient cooling units in buildings;
- Placing low-energy bulbs in the common areas;
- Improving the management of the lighting in meeting rooms;
- Installing more energy-efficient heat pumps in Strasbourg;
- Heating the buildings by means of cogeneration (or tri-generation), which produces electricity from excess heat, etc.
- Setting up passive-energy buildings.
Every year since 2008, all electricity purchased by the European Parliament has been 'green' (produced from renewable sources), with appropriate certificates of origin.

The Parliament also generates its own renewable energy on-site in Strasbourg (heat pumps) and Brussels (heat pumps, cogeneration, and solar photovoltaic). In 2019, this energy represented 15.3% of the Parliament's total energy consumption. For Strasbourg, the share of renewable energy generated on-site in terms of total energy use was 48.2%, whereas for Brussels it was 0.63%. In December 2019, the Parliament moved into the first block of the new Adenauer building in Luxembourg; once the work on the building is fully finished, all Luxembourg-based staff will be transferred to it, vacating the office buildings they currently occupy. The new building's energy needs will be covered by a state-of-the-art tri-generation plant (a plant that combines three functions – power generation, heating and cooling – in one), a geothermal heating and cooling system, and a mix of photovoltaic and thermal solar panels.

The Parliament is working towards going paperless. Actions include, among other things, making full use of the e-committee and e-meeting applications for the work of the parliamentary committees (several have already gone entirely paperless), and eventually a pilot project for a paperless plenary. Additional efforts are also being made to fully digitalise administrative processes, in particular in relation to staff, missions, finance and public procurement.

All A4 paper used in the Parliament’s offices is 100% recycled and is non-chlorine bleached, and the paper used in the print shops is either recycled or is certified as coming from sustainably managed forests.

The first phase of an effort to significantly reduce the number of individual printers and replace them with shared network printers and multifunctional devices began in 2015 and is ongoing. As of December 2019, the number had been reduced by half, with the removal of over 4 000 individual printers.
The following steps have contributed to lowering water consumption in the Parliament:
- better detection and management of leaks and faults in the equipment;
- technical modifications in new and renovated buildings (rainwater flushing for restrooms; water-saving, eco-labelled sanitary and water equipment);
- increased collection and use of rainwater and groundwater in landscaping and maintaining green spaces;
- increased awareness-raising and sharing of best practices.

The Parliament’s high recycling rate has been accomplished through:
- increased recycling of office and kitchen waste;
- the introduction of five-compartment waste recycling bins at the three sites (589 in total);
- reduction in the number of general purpose office waste bins.

Paper constitutes a large part of the recycled waste and, since the Parliament is rapidly reducing its paper consumption, additional efforts are needed to keep recycling rates high.

Non-recycled waste increased significantly due to large volumes of construction and renovation waste in Brussels and Strasbourg in 2019. All other waste streams, including other types of non-recycled waste at the three building sites, either remained constant or decreased in 2019. Therefore, when discounting the special construction waste produced, the indicator actually improved significantly, with a 25.2% reduction in 2019 when compared to 2012.
In 2019, a total of 79,540 kg of food was discarded for 1,182,164 meals sold, resulting in a ratio of 67 g of food waste per meal. Significant efforts to reduce food waste through better planning, reduced portion sizes on request, and food donations resulted in a decrease of food waste per portion served. Since 2013, all food waste at the three sites has been converted to usable biogas by means of biomethanation. No food waste is incinerated.

The Parliament was the first EU institution to launch a comprehensive food donation programme in 2016, where unsold food is donated to charity instead of being thrown away.

The Parliament’s green public procurement (GPP) approach is based on the classification of contracts with respect to their greenness and on monitoring performance at the level of the Parliament as a whole. This includes greening targets for specific groups of products/services considered to have a high environmental impact and a significant potential for greening (such as buildings, cleaning, food and catering, furniture, gardening, IT and waste management). Examples of contracts of the Parliament that have been classified as very green or green include one for the purchase of office supplies and accessories at the three places of work, a second for maintenance of the green spaces in Strasbourg, a third for finishing construction works in Brussels, a fourth for subsidised public transport for Brussels-based staff and a fifth for greening catering contracts, including gradual reduction of plastic and plastic waste.

To provide practical help with introducing green elements into contracts, an interinstitutional GPP helpdesk has been established for the eight participating EU institutions and bodies through a public procurement procedure, with the Parliament as the lead institution.
Interesting EMAS-related facts and figures

Parliament wins prizes!

In 2017, the European Parliament was the first EU institution to become the national European EMAS Award laureate of a Member State (France). And in May 2017, at the EU EMAS Award ceremony in Malta, the Parliament was awarded the second prize in the public administration category.

In October 2016, Bruxelles Environnement (the public service responsible for the environment and energy in the Brussels-Capital Region) awarded the 'Label Entreprise Ecodynamique' to the Parliament for its excellent overall environmental performance.

In June 2017, the 'Prix Luminus de l'Energie et de l'Environnement' was awarded to construction company Atenor and the Parliament for the Wilfried Martens building’s high energy-efficiency standard (excellent insulation and efficient heating/air-conditioning systems incorporating ground-source heat pumps).

In 2018, the Parliament and its catering service provider, Compass Belgilux, were awarded the Good Food Label for the self-service restaurants in the Spinelli and Spaak buildings in Brussels. The Good Food label is awarded by Bruxelles Environnement and is a guarantee of high-quality food that is sustainable, obtained in ways that are respectful of the environment, and in line with fair trade practices.

Good to know

- Number of staff coming to work primarily by bike: 1 196.
- Number of five-compartment sorting bins throughout the premises: 589.
- Number of water-dispensing columns throughout the premises: approximately 350.

What the Parliament recycles

In addition to the new five-compartment waste bins introduced throughout the Parliament's buildings, corporate recycling facilities are also available for the collection and recovery of catering waste (including food), cooking oil, wood, metal, light fittings, fluorescent and sodium lamps, unwanted office files and binders, printer and photocopier toner cartridges, batteries, television monitors, refrigerators, small electronic equipment and computer hardware, and batteries.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Around 15 years ago
The Parliament began preparations to set up and implement an environmental management system in accordance with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) Regulation.

By 2006
The Parliament had set up its own environmental management system, carried out its first internal audit cycle and adopted the documents required for running the system.

In 2007
After its initial environmental review, the Parliament adopted its environmental policy. Following an external audit and receiving ISO-certification, all three of Parliament’s sites (in Belgium, France and Luxembourg) were registered for EMAS, making the Parliament one of the first EU institutions to obtain such registration and the only EU parliament to be EMAS registered.

In 2015
The Parliament set up a forum for national parliaments from EU Member States and candidate countries, to exchange ideas, experiences and best environmental management practices.

In 2019
The Parliament renewed its environmental policy in November 2019, reaffirming its commitment to maintaining EMAS registration and its environmental approach typified by continuous improvement. New and more ambitious unified environmental key performance indicator (KPI) targets have been set for the current legislative term; with the targets to be achieved by 2024.

In 2020
In June 2020, all political groups agreed on a joint voluntary environmental commitment, aimed at maintaining the Parliament’s EMAS registration and improving its environmental performance. They also encouraged their staff to show environmentally responsible behaviour and be mindful of their energy, water and paper consumption. The political groups committed to greening their procurement (as is the practice of the Parliament as a whole), working towards making their events sustainable, and promoting videoconferencing and teleworking.

The EMAS Unit, a Central Service attached to the Secretary-General of the European Parliament, coordinates the implementation of the environmental management system and also manages the EMAS-related budget and the procurement procedures. It reports on the European Parliament’s environmental performance using key performance indicators calculated relative, to the number of employees (full time equivalents, or FTEs).

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