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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**ON POLICY FOR THE ACCOMMODATION OF COMMISSION SERVICES IN
BRUSSELS AND LUXEMBOURG**

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1997 in Amsterdam, the Member States decided that the Headquarter of the European Commission would be based in Brussels and confirmed the Decision of 8 April 1965 defining the specific activities that would be based in Luxembourg.

Since then, the Commission has defined on three occasions its policy objectives in terms of buildings policy. Through its Communications of 1996 on buildings policy in Brussels and Luxembourg, of 1999 on property policy in Brussels and of 2003 on buildings policy and infrastructures in Brussels¹, the Commission highlighted and confirmed the three following objectives:

- The rational installation of services and better working conditions for staff;
- The intensification of acquisition policy;
- Reflecting the impact of the Commission's buildings policy on the urban environment of Brussels, through the intensification of the dialogue with the Belgian authorities.

Since 2003, the situation in Brussels and Luxembourg has evolved to the extent that existing policy in this field needs to be adapted to take account of existing objectives and of the evolution on the marketplace. Also, the Commission wants to further harmonise the policies implemented in Brussels and Luxembourg, while taking account of the specificities of the two sites.

The most notable changes have taken place in the area of the average market price, the total surface occupied on both sites, the increased focus on the environment and the need to reduce the Commission's carbon footprint, on security and safety and in relations with the host country authorities.

Against this background the Commission, through the present Communication, sets out its major policy orientations and requirements for the future, focussing in particular on the following elements:

- Definition of a long term strategic plan for space requirements. This plan will underpin the major options and requirements of the Commission in terms of future location and real estate developments.

¹ SEC(1996) 1095, COM(1999) 713, COM(2003) 755.

- Pursuing the rationalisation efforts of the current property portfolio, notably by concentrating the Commission in a smaller number of larger buildings. This will enable space to be used more efficiently in modern, fit for purpose buildings.
- In Brussels, support to the conception of the redevelopment, by the Belgian authorities, of the "Quartier européen"; at this stage, it is proposed that this area remain the centre of Commission activity. This presence should be complemented by the development of a limited number of significant poles outside the "Quartier européen", thereby spreading the Commission presence and exerting a downward pressure on the price of property.
- In Luxembourg confirmation of the "Kirchberg" as the main pole of the Commission.
- Revision of the buildings procurement methodology – to be implemented as of 1 January 2008 - to ensure both maximum value for money – notably by using its negotiating position to best advantage – and transparency towards the market.
- The combination of concentration of the above elements should enable sufficient investment in implementing a series of policy principles – notably to achieve environmentally sustainable, high quality buildings and improvement of the housing conditions for staff.

These elements are mutually reinforcing. Together with the current co-operation with the local authorities, in particular the Brussels Region in the case of Belgium, which is committed to facilitating the implementation of this strategic approach, the Commission is in a unique position to bring about a significant and lasting improvement in the area of buildings policy to the benefit of the Institution, its staff and the host countries.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION

2.1. The existing situation

2.1.1. Brussels

At the end of June 2007, the Commission in Brussels occupied approximately 865 000 m² of space in Brussels over 61 buildings², housing a total of almost 22 000 staff (officials and contract staff). The majority of buildings are small or very small (under 15 000 m², accounting for two third of the total) and only 8 are larger than 20 000 m². In Brussels, the Commission's premises³ are primarily clustered together in three different areas⁴:

- the "Quartier européen"⁵ (710 000 m² with almost 19 000 members of staff);
- the Beaulieu area (80 000 m² with 2 000 members of staff);
- the Rue de Genève/Da Vinci area (56 500 m² with 1 250 members of staff).

2.1.2. Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, at the end of June 2007, the Commission occupied around 125 000 m² of office space over 5 office buildings housing a total of just over 3 740 staff (officials and contract staff). The Commission's premises are primarily clustered together in two different areas within Luxembourg: the Kirchberg area and the Gasperich area.

2.1.3. General evolution

Over the past decade, the Commission has pursued a general policy of acquiring buildings, principally through emphyteosis, typically over a period of 27 years. The current situation is nevertheless characterised by a number of weaknesses, many of which have been identified by reports from the European Court of Auditors, supplemented by the findings of the Internal Audit Service in 2007. Despite the adoption of communications on buildings policy in the past, the implementation of the principles upon which they were based – a number of which are reflected in the present document – foundered on the practicalities of introducing changes across so many buildings, because the vast majority of buildings are too small or incapable of being suitably adapted. In addition, significant change could only have been introduced successfully with the active collaboration and partnership of the relevant host country authorities, but which was not sufficiently addressed in the past.

² Including others buildings like Conference Centre, Historical Archives, Logistic and Social Buildings. The office space occupied by Commission staff is 804 000 m², in 51 office buildings.

³ Including offices and other facilities.

⁴ Some buildings – such as the Historical Archives, the IT Rooms - are located in other areas, for a total surface of ca. 18 500 m².

⁵ The "Quartier Européen" includes the area between Cour St Michel - Madou Tower, Boulevard Clovis – Square de Meeûs.

The existing approach, as defined by the previous Communications on buildings policy, must be reinforced and rationalised through:

- the definition of a sufficiently long-term planning of space requirements to avoid piecemeal acquisition or rental of buildings; this task will be primarily undertaken by the offices OIB and OIL through the Multi Annual Policy Framework (MAPF), that is validated by the respective Management Committees of the Offices⁶;
- increased market prospection, transparency and competition regarding the procurement of buildings⁷;
- the limitation of buildings in the "Quartier européen" in Brussels, with a view to avoiding upward pressure on cost;
- taking into account the whole life costs of the buildings acquired, leading to large future renovation costs, in many cases before the end of purchase or usufruct contracts. A study in this respect will be undertaken and completed before the end of 2008;
- reinforcing existing efforts to reduce the atomisation of the Commission across a very large number of buildings, which has the effect of increasing costs of infrastructure ICT and related services management, requiring unnecessary additional space, preventing the Commission from realising economies of scale which should be achievable for an organisation of the Commission's size, reducing the Institution's physical symbolic impact in the host country and making urban planning difficult for the host countries;
- the need to build and reinforce partnerships in the past with the host country authorities, in particular the Brussels Capital Region. In this respect the Task Force "EU - Belgium"⁸ has started to play a useful role;
- the need to further strengthen efforts undertaken so far to increase efficiency in terms of energy consumption, reflecting the growing importance in recent years of measures to combat climate change.

Based on this approach real improvements should occur. With the development of much larger, more efficient buildings and the ability to gain full advantage from our position in the property market by strengthening the necessary elements of competition at different levels - including an improved market prospection - there will be scope for making much needed improvements to buildings, so as to ensure that they meet the needs of the Commission and its staff, and comply with policies advocated more generally by the EU.

⁶ As foreseen by the Commission Decision C(2003)570/5 of 22.7.2003 defining the administrative rules applicable to OIB. Given the budgetary impact of this type of decisions, it is proposed in addition that for both Offices the opinion of the Management Committees will be delivered on the basis of a preliminary agreement to be given by DG BUDG on the global envelope of the MAPF.

⁷ See section 4.1.

⁸ See section 7.1.1.

2.2. Future space requirements in Brussels and Luxembourg

The Commission's space requirements for the short, medium and long term are the subject, since 2003, of a comprehensive pluri-annual plan⁹ updated each year (the MAPF) consistently with the Commission's Strategic Planning and Programming cycle. This indicates m² required for each year, and indicates the expiry of purchase agreements, rental contracts and other arrangements¹⁰. This long-term planning, covering a period of 15 years, will increasingly be the basic instrument to allow the Commission to take its major decisions in terms of strategy. All future decisions on the localization, on new mid-term projects and the possible development of new pole(s) will have to be based and coherent with this planning.

Brussels

Over and above the 2 500 staff who joined or will be joining the Commission in Brussels within the period 2004-2008 as a result of the accession of 10 new Member States in 2004, a further 850 new staff are expected to join following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as of 2007. The projected growth in staff numbers will generate additional demands with respect to the current situation¹¹ on office space estimated at approx. 35 000 m² over the coming 3 years. In this context, particular attention will be devoted to the development of new conference facilities.

Luxembourg

Regarding Luxembourg, over and above the staff who joined or will be joining the Commission within the period 2004-2008 as a result of the accession of 10 new Member States, notably within the framework of the EUR-2 enlargement 200 people should be housed on the site. This, with the recuperation of deficit space, represents a need of an increase of 12 000 m² of office space.

The consolidation of IT-infrastructure and the hosting of the various Directorates general Information Systems at the Data Centre would require to take into account the possibilities of a rather broad extension of both the future Data Center and its new back-up centre at a distance allowing completely secure telecommunications with very high flow. These would be housed respectively in new Commission buildings and notably in the Jean Monnet 2. A detailed study evaluating the cost/efficiency of this approach will be up-dated in 2007. Nevertheless, to cope with security contingencies, the Commission is considering the rental of "IT Rooms".

⁹ For the time being, this plan takes into account only the spaces that are needed by the Commission, excluding Executive Agencies.

¹⁰ Including renovations when the economic lifetime of the building has already been exceeded.

¹¹ See section 2.1.

3. INCREASED EFFICIENCY AND COHERENCE THROUGH CONCENTRATION OF COMMISSION SERVICES IN FEWER, LARGER BUILDINGS

The existing property portfolio shall be rationalised significantly by concentration of services into a smaller number of large buildings (in principle at least 50–100 000 m² for each building or complex). At present, the efficiency of buildings (notably in terms of the ratio of useable net space to overall m²) varies widely and is greatly limited by their small size in many cases. The dispersion of DGs in several buildings should be avoided to concentrate one DG in only one building and when allocating a new building a priority should be given to DGs that are housed in less efficient buildings. This offers considerable potential for increased efficiency (more efficient use of space, shared facilities, consolidated and shared ICT infrastructure and related services, costs of controlling access and security, building management, water consumption, heating and cooling, lighting, lifts and other services) without any negative impact on staff and with the possibility of creating economies.

4. IMPROVING THE COMMISSION'S CAPACITY TO ACT IN THE PROPERTY MARKET

There are two fundamental ways in which the Commission could be able to improve its capacity to act in the property market and to gain best advantage from its relative weight in terms of negotiating advantageous terms on procurement and financing:

4.1. Increased competition on the marketplace: A revised methodology for buying and rental of buildings

Existing procurement procedures comply fully with the requirements of the Financial Regulation (Article 91 of the Financial Regulation¹² and Articles 116(1) and 126 (1) point h of Modex). However, as confirmed also by the Internal Audit Service, they are designed in a way that ensures neither a sufficiently high degree of transparency nor all the necessary elements of full competition in order to ensure best value for money. For this reason, the Commission feels the need to increase both transparency and hence competition in the area of procedures for renting and buying buildings. It is thus proposed to develop a new methodology with a view to perfecting the existing procedures envisaged by the legislator in order to sign a building contract, on the one hand by adding the element of systematic market prospection by means of publication of a buildings' prospecting notice, and on the other hand by further structuring and clarifying the procedures within the Commission.

The proposed methodology set out in this Communication aims at preserving the necessary discretionary power of the Commission in the field of real estate public procurement, while aiming at the best price-quality ratio. Whilst remaining within the scope of the procedures foreseen by the Financial Regulation and its Implementing Rules, the proposed methodology clarifies and elaborates on the prospection and negotiation phases of the procedure. This choice has the advantage of respecting the current regulatory framework and enhancing transparency.

¹² This article define the principles of attribution and the procedures in the area of public procurement.

It is also proposed to review the impact of this new methodology after three years of operation, with a particular attention to its efficiency.

The proposed methodology is based on four principles:

- better information of the market by means of the annual publication of an estimate of the needs of the Commission for the current year and the following four years. This information will be published in the Official Journal of the EU (OJEU) and on the appropriate Commission websites at the beginning of each year; this information of the market will be done in addition to a systematic market survey by OIB/OIL of real estate availabilities;
- increased competition among the market players by means of a systematic publication in the OJEU and on the appropriate Commission websites of the specific needs for any new real estate project and by the introduction of the concept of the systematic negotiation of the financial conditions with several tenderers in parallel;
- increased transparency of the procedure, both internally and externally, in particular by the systematic publication of:
 - minimum requirements of each concrete project;
 - exclusion criteria;
 - the result of the procedure.
- greater cooperation and interaction between the departments concerned of the Commission with the establishment of a multidisciplinary committee, the Real Estate Committee. This committee will be invited to provide its opinion to the authorizing officer by delegation¹³ during all the phases of the methodology and in particular on :
 - the specifications and functionalities of each project before publication;
 - the criteria that will be used to evaluate each project;
 - the evaluation and the selection of the projects to be negotiated;
 - the selection of the finally selected project.

The Committee will have the possibility of requesting, at any moment and notably at the key phases of the procedure, internal and/or external¹⁴ expertise on any question of technical and/ or financial nature.

The proposed methodology foresees six phases:

- Preliminary Phase: identification of multi-annual needs and publication in the OJEU and on the appropriate Commission websites;
- Phase 1: based on the preliminary phase, identification of yearly needs;
- Phase 2: publication of the specific needs;

¹³ The Director of OIB and the Director of OIL.

¹⁴ To this end a framework contract will be concluded by OIB and OIL with specialized consultants.

- Phase 3: analysis of all projects received; acceptance/ refusal of projects; comparative financial analysis of all valid offers received and pre-selection of three projects;
- Phase 4: technical analysis and financial negotiation of the three projects selected and identification of one project, to launch phase 5;
- Phase 5: technical study and analysis of budgets needs, drafting of the contract for the project selected under phase 4;
- Phase 6: Inter Service Consultation further to the outcome of phase 5 and signature of the contract.

At the end of phases 1, 3, 4 and 5, the Real Estate Committee will provide an advisory opinion.

The Commission will retain the power to decide at all moments, and with due justification, not to use this new methodology – in full or in part - with a view to ensuring the highest possible value for money.

In addition, in order to further improve transparency and to fully inform market operators of the Commission's procedures, the Commission will publish in 2008 an Information Guide on the procedures, explaining the new methodology and the conditions applicable for leasing/purchasing buildings. The purpose of this guide will be twofold:

- (1) It will bring together and explain the internal procedures and the legal framework in which public contracts for the lease or purchase of buildings have to be conducted and which stem from the Financial Regulations¹⁵.
- (2) It will lay down the general conditions under which the Commission can buy or lease buildings and describe the procedures to be followed.

4.2. Examining scope for better financing options and mechanisms

A fundamental criterion used when negotiating buildings is the cost incurred. The Commission therefore constantly monitors market trends and seeks opportunities to keep a good balance between space needs and budget perspectives.

On the basis of existing experience, as a general principle, the Commission will pursue its acquisition policy as defined in previous years. Over and above the stability gained through its acquisition policy, the Commission has also put in place a new way of funding acquisitions, which is "Deferred payment purchasing"¹⁶; the latter is generally both legally and financially simpler to implement than the previous legal form of leasehold contracts (*emphytéose*). In any event, in order to keep certain flexibility, the Commission envisages keeping a number of buildings under rental or usufruct status. A study to evaluate the correct balance between acquisition and

¹⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 1605/2002.

¹⁶ The deferred payment scheme allows the Commission to purchase a building and pay its price over several years (generally 27 years). The property rights are transferred to the Commission the day of the purchase.

rental or usufruct will be finalised by 2008. Its results will be used to further improving the overall Commission approach in this area.

However, in order to fully reap the potential benefits of the acquisition policy, it is important to fully take into account the whole life costs of buildings. The acquisition contracts entered into for a period of 27 years, for example, considerably exceed the expected useful life of office buildings – estimated around 20 years – before thorough renovation is necessary. This acquisition policy will thus impact on future maintenance and refurbishment costs as the Commission will have to integrate, into its global multi-annual planning, future renovation works of the buildings it owns and subsequent temporary housing solutions for the staff affected by these works. The need to empty – even on a temporary basis – the buildings that need to be renovated will impact on the real estate portfolio, notably as short-term rentals and/or sale of buildings may be necessary or advisable. To cope with this particular situation, adequate mechanisms will have to be defined and examined carefully in terms of their operational, legal and fiscal feasibility.

While acquisition will continue to be the default, the feasibility of new approaches to financing will be examined in detail, in parallel with the mechanisms used until now. These consist of two possibilities:

- Conclusion of a lease including a service contract, whereby the owner of a building would guarantee to maintain a given level of service and comfort for the period of the contract, or of public private partnerships.
- Concluding financing arrangements through the European Investment Bank, as recommended by the European Court of Auditors.

5. STRATEGIC APPROACH ON LOCATION OF BUILDINGS

5.1. The Commission in Brussels

Due to capacity requirements and in the light of available financial resources, the Commission has, over a number of years, pursued a policy of limited diversification and decentralisation of its office space beyond the "Quartier européen", developing additional clusters in other areas of Brussels in which urban development is equally important. In the context of a clear long-term strategy, a revised approach is now needed. In this context, there are three principal options:

5.1.1. Retain and redevelop the "Quartier européen" as a single pole, concentrating all activity except archives and other ancillary services.

This has the attraction of creating a strong symbolic presence in Brussels, bringing coherence, identity and maximising economies of scale. It would reduce travelling around Brussels, and be popular with staffs who overwhelmingly want to work in the European Quarter¹⁷. This would require major regrouping of existing buildings and construction of a major new series of buildings. However, the sheer scale of

¹⁷ Staff survey "The Commission's building location policy in Brussels" launched between 17 January and 2 February 2007.

development will prove unfeasible unless the Commission adopts the new approach to use of space which would enable overall requirements to be reduced sufficiently. Importantly, concentration into a single pole would reduce the Commission's little flexibility in meeting future needs, limit somewhat possibilities for expansion and increase pressure on property prices. In addition, it may make integration into the local environment more difficult.

5.1.2. *A multi-pole approach, based on redeveloping the "Quartier européen" as the main site of Commission activity, together with up to three large poles outside it.*

This approach would confirm the "Quartier européen" as the main site in Brussels, and will require major regrouping and construction there as in option 5.1.1. In addition, a limited number of up to 3 other poles would be developed progressively (in accordance with the policy principles set out in section 6 below). Each pole should in principle have a sufficient critical mass in order to be viable and offer the necessary economies of scale – ranging from 100 000–250 000 m² per pole.

The identification of suitable poles would need to be undertaken in close co-operation with the regional and local authorities, but preliminary examination indicates that there are a number of viable potential sites which could be developed over the next 5–10 years. Whilst this approach has some drawbacks (additional travelling between sites, geographical dispersal of staff and could entail additional costs caused by the need to foresee social infrastructure -such as catering facilities- on the sites), it would bring significant advantages: it would meet the concerns of the Court of Auditors that diversification is needed in order to reduce upward pressure on the property market in the "Quartier européen" by introducing a strong element of competition; and the host country authorities would welcome the ability to better ensure mixed land use in the "Quartier européen".

5.1.3. *Creation of a single, new site, outside the "Quartier européen", for Commission operations.*

This approach is based on the construction of a new 'European city' on a brownfield/greenfield site outside the "Quartier européen". It would have the advantages of regrouping all Departments and staff on a bespoke, modern site and give both flexibility and capacity for expansion and / or reorganization of services. Preliminary investigation has shown that a number of viable potential sites exist. However, this has some strong disadvantages: the lead time for the identification, planning and construction is very long, and such a site could not be ready in a reasonable future. Also, there could be a considerable distance between the Commission and the other Institutions.

* * *

At this stage, out of these three options, option 5.1.2. appears to be the preferable one.

5.2. The Commission in Luxembourg

During the 1990s, the growth of employees and the need to leave certain buildings that the Commission occupied on the Plateau du Kirchberg, forced it to settle in the southern area of the city – the so-called Gasperich area. This second pole of the Commission has become final since the acquisition of the EUROFORUM building primarily intended for the services of DG TREN and for other Commission departments requiring a very high protection level. In the medium term, with the construction of the new Jean Monnet building (the so called JMO2) on the Plateau du Kirchberg, the Commission envisages to abandon the small buildings it occupies on the site of Gasperich.

The existing JMO1 building has an exploitation permit running to December 2014. Its occupation by the Commission for the period 2007-2014 is due to be formalized via the signature of a rental agreement with the Kirchberg 'Fonds d'Urbanisation'.

The JMO2 building, with a total surface area of 120 000 m², should replace the JMO1 building. It should be sited on the Kirchberg plateau on a plot likely to be offered by the Luxembourg state to the Commission for a symbolic price of €1. A Memorandum of Understanding is due to define the working arrangements between the Luxembourg state and the Commission.

The social infrastructure on the Plateau du Kirchberg was built in the 1980s and will reach the end of its lifetime after 2010. The Commission will therefore undertake by the end of 2007 the preparatory studies relating to the location and to the definition of the needs in the next few years. Provisional solutions, such as the extension of the current "Centres de la Petite Enfance" are being proposed in the meantime. Also, the Commission should consider, with the other Institutions, the possibility to avail of an Inter-institutional Centre for Social activities.

5.3. Agencies

An internal general debate on the Agencies, Executives Agencies and other cases of required spaces (for example for personnel linked to research program) has begun. Based on the results of this analysis, all aspects of buildings policy for these cases and the respective roles of OIB/OIL and the concerned services will have to be defined. Given the existing expertise of OIB and OIL, it can be expected that they would be responsible for the sourcing and management of office space for the Executive Agencies on the basis of Service Level Agreements defining among others the remuneration of the services offered.

6. ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDINGS POLICY PRINCIPLES

The benefits of increased efficiency from its property portfolio, coupled with a reduction in the number of buildings occupied, make it possible to implement a buildings policy strategy which is articulated around a series of interlocking policy and management principles. Taken together, they represent a holistic and sustainable approach which should facilitate major improvements in the quality and nature of buildings and therefore for the working life of the staff who occupy them. These principles will themselves be the benchmarks for the construction or acquisition of new buildings, and will serve as a basis for competition among potential poles of Commission activity.

First and foremost, the key objective of the Commission is to ensure high value for money for its real estate portfolio, both existing and future. By implementing the policy principles set out in this Communication, the Commission aims to ensure that in future it will have more efficient buildings to house its staff in at least the same comfort conditions, independently of the building location, while ultimately respecting the constraints imposed by the agreement reached by the Member states under the financial perspectives.

The very purpose of these measures is, in the longer term, to allow the Commission to improve the quality of its buildings, hence increasing the value of its assets by selecting only buildings of high quality and high efficiency, in strategic locations, through appropriate procedures and negotiations and in full respect of the budgetary constraints.

6.1. The human and functional dimensions

The buildings occupied by the Commission are at the same time a powerful symbol of the Institution's presence, and have a major impact on the urban environment in which they are located. Commission buildings should therefore not be a blot on the landscape, but instead make a positive contribution to city life. As a key actor in the property market, the Commission will set very high standards for its own development in an effort to improve the quality of the neighbourhood, to convey a positive image of Europe in the eyes of citizens and to ensure a modern and appropriate working environment for staff and visitors. The future buildings policy of the Commission should therefore be based on the following principles:

6.1.1. Quality of buildings

The design of Commission buildings (and in particular flagship projects) should be of a very high architectural standard which makes an appropriate and positive symbolic statement underlining the nature of the Institution's presence; and also ensures the provision of highly efficient buildings. The Commission considers that it will obtain high quality results in this area by launching and/or participating in the selection boards of architectural competitions for all major development. The use of this kind of competition should not generate, in the long term, additional costs and must result in neutrality from the budgetary point of view. Costs will be assessed against possible benefits brought in terms of improvement of quality, functionality and efficiency.

6.1.2. *Integration into the urban environment*

Buildings should be fully integrated into the urban environment in which they are situated, facilitating an appropriate urban mix between office, residential and commercial property, offering public space and enabling social integration of Commission staff in the host country. Ensuring as far as possible the mixed usage of its buildings requires close collaboration with local authorities and urban planners, and that the values represented and defended by the European Institutions and the image of the Commission, as well as security considerations, be taken fully into account.

6.1.3. *Comfort of the working environment*

In full compatibility with the budgetary constraints, appropriate consideration must be given to the physical environment in which staff work through the introduction of more flexible arrangements where appropriate and by providing a pleasant, healthy and modern working environment that is attractive and motivating. By all means, and in particular if the scenario presented under 5.1.2. will be implemented as foreseen, consideration should be given where appropriate to new methods of space allocation and furnishing, in particular to workstation design for the open-plan office. The more widespread practice of concepts such as tele-working, flexitime and part-time working are expected to have an impact on the office space needs of the Commission. The relevant services will therefore analyse the impact of these new working methods both in terms of quality of life at work and of possible savings. They will report on the outcome of this analysis.

Part of the efficiency gains should be invested in improving the quality of the working environment and the well-being of staff – from the materials and fittings to office equipment.

6.1.4. *Disabled access*

The accessibility of buildings for people with disabilities is of great importance. All newly acquired buildings will therefore have to be accessible to disabled people, and existing buildings will be progressively adapted wherever possible.

6.1.5. *Social Amenities*

The Commission's policy for "well-being at work"¹⁸ for its staff has as one of its objectives to better reconcile private and professional life, taking into account changing attitudes to work and ways of working and changes in the respective roles of women and men.

The provision of high quality childcare facilities is an essential component of the Commission's well-being policy. In order to keep pace with demand, for places in the nurseries, after-school facilities and activities during school holidays, it is clear that the Commission needs to continue to maintain current, and develop new childcare facilities.

¹⁸ SEC(2006) 500.

While several temporary solutions have been found to alleviate as much as possible the current shortage in nursery places, the Commission must develop new nursery projects in the European Quarter and in its immediate neighbourhood and/or in coherence with the new pole policy. A first estimate indicates the need to rapidly provide structure/s that could host 450 children. A document defining the situation on the future projects of the nurseries will be finalized before end of 2007 and communicated to the budget authority¹⁹.

The Commission will continue to ensure the availability of cafeterias and self-service restaurants in immediate or close proximity to the workplace offering staff a variety of high quality and healthy refreshments and meals.

6.1.6. European Schools and After School Facilities

Of key importance is that the provision of European Schools in Brussels and Luxembourg is able to fully meet demand. This will require a greater commitment from the host country authorities to ensure timely planning and opening of new schools and to ensure that European Schools are located close to principal places of activity and/or residential areas where there is an existing concentration of Commission staff, consistently with this policy. This approach will meet the legitimate needs of staff and their children, and be in the interests of reducing environmental pollution linked to transport (see paragraph 6.2.2 below).

With regard to after-school care, existing facilities have been complemented with a provisional solution for the short term, while a central after-school facility and/or further facilities in the future fourth European School are envisaged for the long term. This policy of integration of after-school facilities in the European Schools will be pursued. In Luxembourg, the current after school facilities will be extended in the next couple of years. In addition, in the period 2007-2010, in parallel with the construction of the 2nd European School, a new integrated facility, comprising day care and after school services, will be developed.

6.1.7. Security, Safety and Health

The health and safety of persons working in the Commission sites shall be given a high priority, such that compliance²⁰ with the relevant national norms and standards is achieved and in line with the initiatives taken by the Commission in the area of public health in particular in relation to healthy diets, physical activity and correct ergonomics at work. For example, the Commission is opened to analyse options to participate to a sports centre at interinstitutional level. Particular attention will be paid also to air pollution related aspects.

¹⁹ This document will highlight the specific situation of two major projects (Cornet-Leman, Wagon-Lits) facing a substantial delay.

²⁰ Verified by DG Admin.

With the significant rise in security incidents and attacks at both European and world level in recent years, the Commission is aware of the need to ensure that its staff and assets are properly protected. To this end, effective, proportionate, security measures, reflecting the threat assessments established for buildings and services will continue to be an integral part of the planning and operation of existing and new Commission sites. This will include ensuring that any newly constructed buildings will be designed in order to enable them to comply with security requirements, notably concerning access control.

6.2. Reducing the Commission's carbon footprint

Considerable scope exists in three respects for further reducing the Institution's carbon footprint by means of its buildings policy strategy: emissions from buildings, the optimisation of links with public transport and greater synergies in terms of buildings management. As agreed in its mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme²¹, the Commission will set out a strategy for reducing the Commission's carbon footprint. In the building sector, this strategy will follow the principles set out in this communication.

6.2.1. Emissions reduction

It is important that the Commission's existing buildings continue to reduce as far as possible their carbon footprint, and that new projects meet the highest environmental standards with the aim of being carbon neutral. This has the dual benefit of reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as ongoing energy costs.

- For its existing buildings, the Commission has long been committed to sustainable development both through its legislative and political actions and in its daily management, as evidenced through its environmental management initiatives such as the decision²² taken in September 2001 to launch a pilot project, implementing the Eco-Management Audit System (EMAS) Regulation²³. This has resulted in seven buildings in Brussels²⁴ having been certified as EMAS compliant while encouraging some 3,500 staff, as well as contractors working for the Commission, to adopt more environmentally responsible behaviour in work and in all aspects of their lives. The Commission aims at progressively extending EMAS to cover the Commission's main buildings, and all renovations will focus on energy efficiency.

²¹ COM(2007) 225.

²² Commission Decision C(2001)2591 of 7 September 2001 to engage in a process of applying the EMAS Regulation to its activities.

²³ Regulation (EC) 761 of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers of 19 March 2001 allowing voluntary participation by organisations in a Community eco-management and audit scheme.

²⁴ BERL, BRE2, BU-5/9, GUIM, HTWG, MO34 and SC11.

- For new constructions and renovations, the Commission will follow an integrated, synergistic approach that considers all phases of the building's life cycle, from use of reusable or recyclable materials during construction to the rational use of natural resources such as energy (as defined in Directive 2002/91/EC).

6.2.2. *Mobility*

In terms of mobility, the location of buildings and their integration into the public transport network is an important factor in reducing the environmental impact of the Commission and its staff. Main Commission buildings and poles of Commission activity should therefore be located close to public transport hubs including rail, metro or light rail, or have a high level of access to public transport links. This should enable the use of public transport both to and from work as well as between Commission buildings and the other EU Institutions, and to European Schools and crèches. In this context, the Commission stresses its view that not only crèches but also the European Schools should be located close to the main places of activity or the main areas where staff live in order to help reduce the transport impact (and help staff reconcile their working and family lives).

Buildings should also be accessible safely by bicycle, ideally as part of the local network of cycle paths. In this context it is vital that the country authorities take the necessary steps to ensure the availability of sufficient public transport links and other infrastructure, as part of the Commission's existing Plan for Staff Mobility 2006-2009²⁵ for Brussels, which supports and complements existing initiatives to promote the use of public and other sustainable means of transport. Further steps should be taken to build on the Eurobus initiative in Brussels and on the agreement with the Luxembourg city authorities concerning the use of public transport by Commission staff.

6.2.3. *Synergies in buildings management*

Use should be made where possible of latest technological developments, in particular through the use of integrated platforms over internet protocol, in order to integrate the different buildings management systems (alarms, IT networks, access control, maintenance and operation etc.) to facilitate the integrated management of Commission buildings. The introduction of common systems has the potential to further reduce energy consumption, but also to generate other savings through more efficient management and operation of buildings.

²⁵ SEC(2006) 344 – 14.3.2006.

7. IMPLEMENTING THE COMMISSION'S BUILDINGS POLICY

7.1. Cooperation with the stakeholders

7.1.1. Co-operation with Belgian Authorities

The Commission places great importance on improving the quality of life for both its staff and local residents in the European district. In order to achieve this ambition the Commission seeks to improve the physical appearance and urban integration of its buildings in Brussels. This can however only be done with the support of the Belgian authorities, which is a critical success factor for the implementation of this strategy.

The Commission therefore invites the Belgian authorities to further reinforce their coordination at all levels to ensure increased consistency between the different components of the policy of hosting of the European institutions in Belgium. Particular reference is made here to the need to integrate into the concept of presence of the European institutions in Belgium both the office (infrastructure and logistics) and staff dimensions. The latter includes notably crèches and garderies (for which the European Commission is responsible, but for which the Belgian authorities have a role to play with respect to building availability – notably as they have to grant the necessary authorisations) and the European Schools (for which the host country has clearly defined obligations under intergovernmental convention).

Also, the Commission relies heavily on the Belgian authorities to undertake the necessary measures to improve overall transport mobility impacting on the Commission and its staff. The absence of competencies of the Commission and its limited margin of manoeuvre in this area make it indispensable for the Belgian authorities to further develop new visions and projects.

The Commission will continue actively to participate in initiatives such as the Task Force EU-Belgium which was set up to facilitate dialogue between the Institutions and the host country authorities, and the "Fonds Quartier européen" (set up under the auspices of the King Baudouin Foundation) which promotes co-operation, dialogue and exchange, and increases transparency. In this context, it will call upon the Belgian authorities to designate the appropriate bodies to address a number of operational issues and to help it monitoring progress in solving them.

7.1.2. Co-operation with Luxembourg authorities

Relations with the Luxembourg authorities take place via the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which ensure coordination with the other national ministries or public bodies. The Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs regularly participates in the meetings of the Heads of Administration of the European Institutions and bodies located in Luxembourg. This allows coordination in the building policy area both among the Institutions and with the local authorities. With regard to the latter, the Commission invites the Luxembourg authorities to maintain the existing cooperation with a view to find constructive solutions to all pending issues.

7.1.3. *Co-operating with the other European Institutions*

The Commission has long and fruitful experience of co-operation with the other institutions and intends to continue to do so. In terms of inter-institutional co-operation it is clear from the Commission's contacts that there is broad satisfaction with the services it provides to other EU Institutions. There is, however, a consensus that inter-institutional cooperation in the areas managed by the Commission Offices for Infrastructure and Logistics Brussels and Luxembourg, should proceed in a demand-driven way, with no obligation on institutions to work together unless they elect to do so voluntarily. There is no immediate demand by the other Institutions for a fully-fledged inter-institutional office to be established to manage the activities currently delivered by the Commission Offices. Nonetheless, the Commission remains open to discussions on possible future avenues of co-operation, based on concrete initiatives aimed at enhancing economies of scale; in this context, it would be important to define – on a case-by-case basis - the respective roles and responsibilities, including the workload and advantages for each of the Institutions concerned.

7.2. **Revision of building standards and housing conditions**

In order to ensure that the key policy principles presented in this Communication are implemented, the architectural requirements of the Commission's building policy will be laid down in a new document on "Architectural policy" which will be developed by the end of 2008 to complement the Building Standards Manual (MIT)²⁶. The latter will also be reviewed, to take account of the latest technological developments and orientations in term of health and safety. In addition, the Commission's services will adopt a Housing Conditions Manual (HCM) which harmonises the rules and technical criteria for the allocation of space to the Commission's Directorates-General or Services in both Brussels and Luxembourg and will also develop a new programme to assess and improve where necessary the 'good state' of its buildings. In the proposed methodology all new projects will be assessed against the reference standards and norms set in the MIT and in the HCM.

²⁶

This Manual which was updated in June 2004 is the reference document and tool to assess the degree to which buildings or projects proposed to the Commission comply with quantifiable criteria, relating in particular to technical requirements, comfort and safety.