EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Strasbourg, 5.4.2022
C(2022) 2230 final

COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION

Greening the Commission

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Directorate General
Human Resources and Security

CONTENT

1. Introduction: Reaching Corporate Climate Neutrality by 2030 1

2. Building on the Commission's environmental achievements to design the scope of actions ..5

3. Adapting the way of working to reduce GHG emissions 7

A climate-neutral and climate-resilient Commission by 2030 7

Supporting a green and circular economy 16

Preserving and restoring nature and biodiversity 17

Promoting a fair, healthy sustainable and good food system 18

4. Staff participation as EU citizens setting a good example 18

5. Communicate on green actions 20

6. Progress review 21

7. Conclusions 22

Endnotes 23

1. INTRODUCTION: REACHING CORPORATE CLIMATE NEUTRALITY BY 2030

In 2019, the Commission adopted the Communication on the European Green Deal[1] for the European Union (EU) and its citizens, as a response to the climate and environmental-related challenges that are this generation's defining task. On 14 July 2021, the Commission adopted the ambitious "Delivering the European Green Deal" legislative proposals that, as President von der Leyen stated, 'aim[s] to *combine the reduction of* [greenhouse gas] *emissions with measures to preserve nature and put jobs and social balance at the heart of this transformation*'[2].

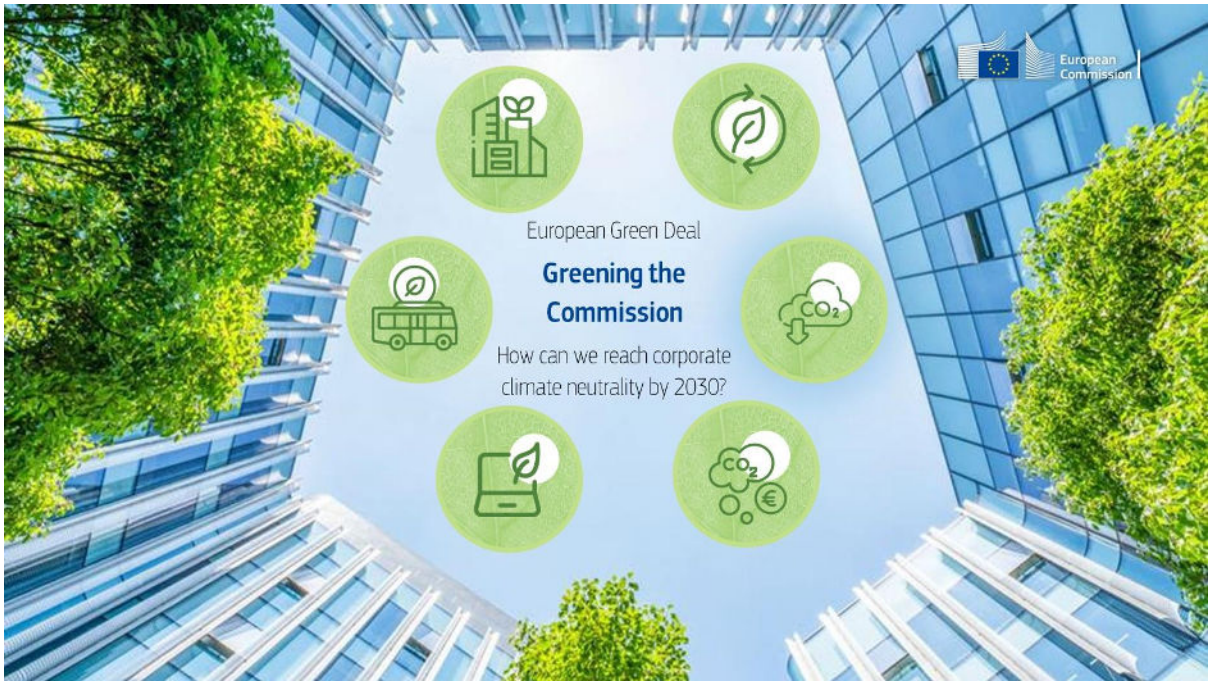
The Green Deal ambition for the EU as a whole is to achieve at least 55 % net emission reductions by 2030 compared to 1990, to become climate neutral by 2050 and to decouple growth from resource use.

In this context, the Commission aims to reach climate neutrality in its operations by 2030 and reduce its environmental footprint. Given its central place in shaping policies, monitoring their implementation, and the wide range of stakeholders it works with, the Commission has a key role to play and is determined to be a front runner of the transition towards a climate neutral society, working together with other EU, international and national public organisations and private businesses.

The Commission wants to demonstrate its commitment by making its climate neutrality pledge under the Climate Pact it adopted in 2020 whereby European actors and citizens are invited to help the EU to meet its goal to be the first climate-neutral continent in the world by 2050. Commission staff's full engagement will also be essential in this collective effort.

This Communication sets out the way the Commission will meet its objective to become climate neutral by 2030 and is accompanied by an action plan covering the major measures to be taken.

The Commission's objective is to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 60% by 2030 compared to 2005[3] and compensate remaining emissions with carbon removals[4].



The objective of reaching corporate climate neutrality by 2030 is a commitment from the Commission, as part of the Green Deal[5], distinct from the 2030 targets agreed for 2030 for the EU. However, while pursuing these efforts for reaching climate neutrality by 2030, it is clear that the Commission's own climate actions are interlinked with economy-wide advances towards the overall EU climate target of climate neutrality by 2050.

Ambitious GHG reductions are the core of the Commission's commitment, and through its work in this sphere, the Commission demonstrates that it strives to match the ambition of the policies it proposes under the European Green Deal, such as the renovation wave[6], the proposals for the revised Energy performance of buildings Directive[7], the Energy efficiency Directive[8], the promotion of energy from renewable sources Directive[9], and the zero pollution and biodiversity strategies[10][11]. Annex B provides a clear overview of the level of commitment by source of emissions.[12]

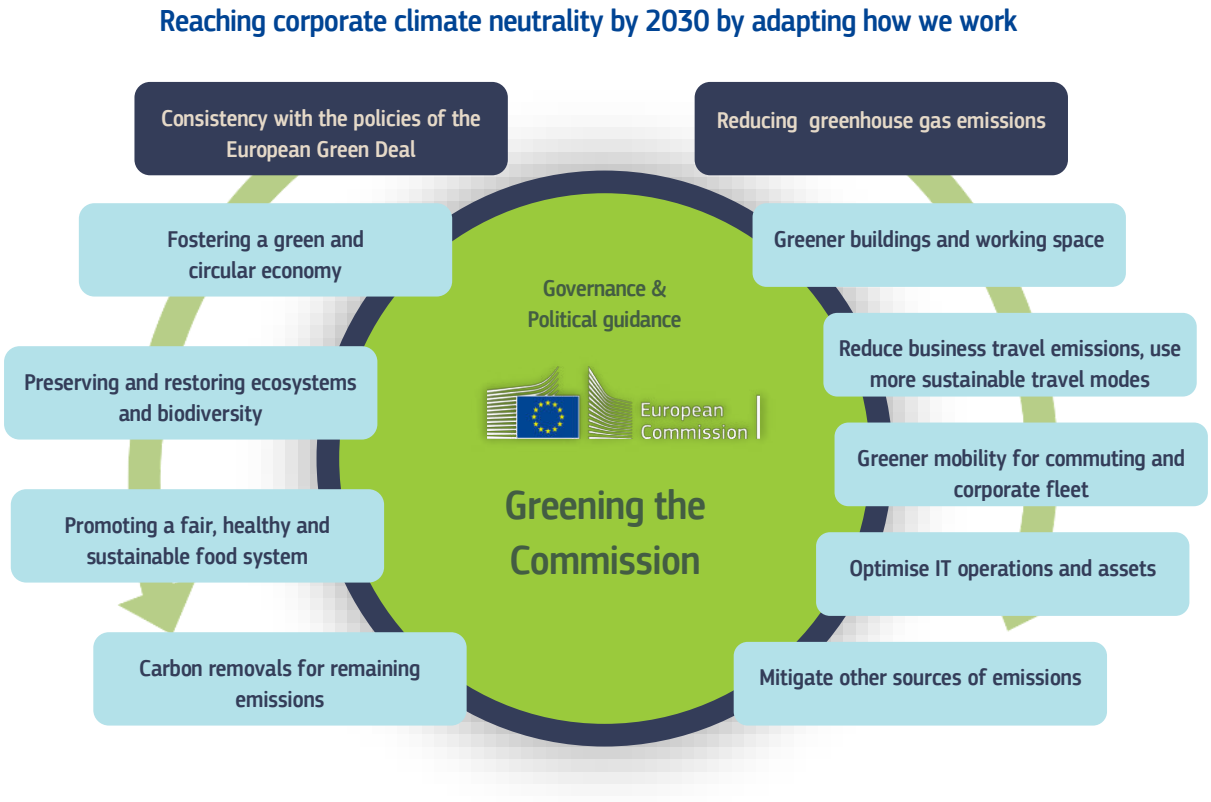
The actions will be implemented as part of the new Human Resources strategy and within the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. This requires a collective commitment from all staff across all areas of activity as it will impact our daily work life. There is a need for coherence between what EU legislation requires from Member States and the European citizens and the way the Commission conducts its own activities. It is thus essential that all staff demonstrate a high sense of responsibility and pride in their contribution to a sustainable and inclusive European society.

The Commission will continue to support its staff towards more sustainable behaviours in all aspects of their professional life and will enhance such support where needed. It also encourages further dialogue between staff and relevant services on options for a sustainable working environment. This

Communication is one of the first actions of the Commission's new Human Resources (HR) Strategy which sets out how to modernise the Commission. The Greening Communication plays a key role in delivering this vision of a workplace which embraces digital solutions and new ways of working, where acting in a green manner becomes part of the core values both individually and as an organisation. This Communication and the Human Resources Strategy go hand in hand alongside a strong commitment from staff. This will improve not only the Commission's climate and environmental performance, but also staff's well-being and health, increasing the attractiveness of the Commission.

The COVID pandemic led to a reduction of GHG emissions at the office through increased digitalisation of the Commission's activities, generalised online contacts and meetings with all stakeholders throughout Europe and beyond, as well as the large-scale adoption of teleworking and promotion of flexible ways of working for all staff. The Commission will factor in the effect on GHG emissions from home offices to ensure a global view of the environmental impact of its operations. It is paramount that the Commission continues to build on these changes post-pandemic to create a greener and more sustainable organisation.

Figure 1 illustrates the various components of this Communication.



2. BUILDING ON THE COMMISSION'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENTS TO DESIGN THE SCOPE OF ACTIONS

In 2005, the Commission became the first EU institution to obtain the eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) registration for its activities and some of its buildings in Brussels. EMAS[13] is a management instrument developed by the European Commission for companies and other organisations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performances. Evaluations and verifications are made by external and independent experts, guaranteeing the credibility of the management tool. Under this system, the Commission publishes an annual environmental statement detailing its achievements, objectives and actions planned[14], providing to the public transparent reliable information.

Over the years, the Commission has substantially expanded its EMAS scope to include now all buildings of its eight sites around the EU[15] and an increasingly wide range of the impacts of its activities[16]. This resulted in major environmental, organisational and financial benefits over the past 20 years: Annex A gives an overview. To reach the objective of climate neutrality by 2030, the actions set out in this Communication will be implemented using the well-established and reliable EMAS framework. This will enable regular reporting, effective monitoring and comparability of the results over time. Additional impacts linked to changes in the Commission's activities may be added to the EMAS scope, such as the environmental impact of home working, currently being assessed.

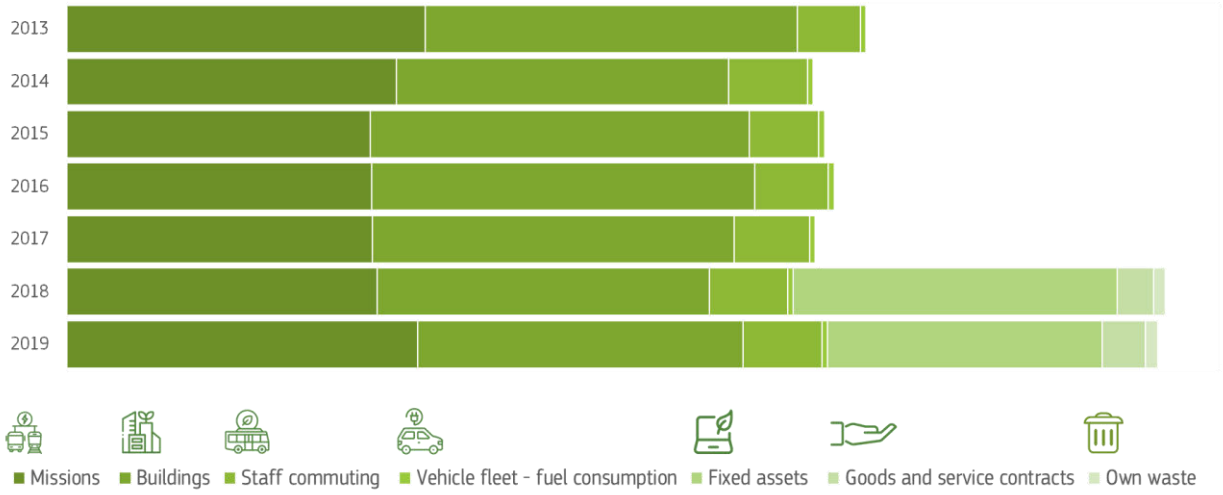
In 2019, the total impact of the Commission's activities represented 219 000 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent[17], consisting of activities managed within the EMAS scope (189 120 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent[18], see Annex B) and external experts' travels for which the cost is borne by the Commission (estimated approximately at 30 000 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent[19]). Buildings and business travel (of staff and external experts) are the main sources of emissions, as shown in Figure 2 and detailed in Annex A.

Notwithstanding the results already achieved and the expertise gained in limiting the environmental impact of its operations, the Commission still has a long way to go to reduce its GHG emissions by 60% compared to 2005. The Commission has also used the findings of a feasibility and scoping study[20] which puts forwards a variety of actions, many of which are already in place to some degree[21]. To monitor the implementation of this Communication and assess the progress made, the Commission will do a progress review in 2024.

Figure 2: Breakdown of GHG emissions by general category of source of emissions, 2019

Reported emissions of GHG (tCO2e) generated by the Commission

from 2013 to 2019, as reported in the 2020 EMAS environmental statement



3. ADAPTING THE WAY OF WORKING TO REDUCE GHG EMISSIONS

Similarly to the way the European Green Deal is transforming the different areas of the EU economy and society for a sustainable future, the Commission will adapt the way it operates in all areas of its own activities, in line with the following objectives, as detailed in the subsequent sections:

- *A climate-neutral and climate-resilient Commission by 2030*
- *Supporting a green and circular economy*
- *Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity*
- *Promoting a fair, healthy and sustainable food system.*

A climate-neutral and climate-resilient Commission by 2030

Use more efficient, sustainable and climate-resilient buildings and working space

As highlighted above, buildings represent the most important source of GHG emissions from the Commission's activities. It is thus important to ensure that the Commission's buildings and working space become more efficient and sustainable. This is also justified by the increased use of telework.

The Commission currently owns or rents approximately 1.6 million square metres across the eight sites included in the scope of EMAS. They are used as office spaces, support facilities, childcare and technical facilities[22]. Brussels is the biggest site in terms of square metres (approximately 60% of the total), followed by Luxembourg and then the five sites of the Joint Research Centre located outside Brussels[23] and the site of Grange managed by the Directorate General for health and food safety. In 2019, the GHG emissions linked to their life cycle and operations, such as heating and cooling, represented 93 442 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent or 43% of the 2019 GHG emissions.

Between 2019 and 2030, the Commission expects to reduce its GHG emissions by at least 30% as a result of the measures related to buildings set out in this Communication. It will follow the best available standards to reduce the carbon footprint of its buildings.

To reach that target, the Commission will comply with the relevant targets set in the package of proposals on energy and climate action aiming at delivering the European Green Deal, in particular concerning the energy efficiency of buildings, which translate the Commission's renovation wave strategy[24], and the use of renewable energy in the energy consumption of buildings[25].

It will also:

- Rent or buy **new low-energy buildings** whenever available.
- Gradually renovate existing building stock to latest standards when appropriate
- Continue to **reduce its electricity, gas and water use** through systematic technical improvements, including renovation, and behavioural changes such as reducing or stopping heating during certain periods. It will ensure more sustainable energy sources and technologies to run our offices, in line with the EU's policy to transition to renewable electricity.
- **Reduce its overall office area** through smarter use of its office space. This measure is implemented through the use of dynamic collaborative space, and increased use of teleworking[26], taking into account specific needs, and the lessons learnt so far in implementing our new building policy. It will also be implemented in Luxembourg.
- In order to have a complete view of the GHG emissions linked to its activities, the environmental impact of the telework of its staff will be factored in at the latest in 2024 in the context of the progress review. The Commission is conducting a study to that end. In parallel, it already communicates to staff on ways to **reduce the environmental impact of working from home** through advice on behaviours and low-energy equipment, and other environmental aspects such as the use of paper and water consumption taking into consideration the host country policies.

Financial savings generated by office space reduction or other energy savings should allow for investment wherever feasible and useful to improve further energy efficiency, install in its sites renewable energy generation systems, in particular photovoltaic and solar water heating installations, or other types of equipment (e.g. videoconferencing equipment). The Commission will also explore with energy service providers the possibility to have all-inclusive energy saving packages (e.g. for financing solar panels). To that end, in line with the renovation wave strategy[27] , the Commission will assess the renovation potential of its portfolio. It is already carefully considering the possibility of further investing in on-site green energy generation whenever possible[28].

In Brussels, which represents approximately one third of the emissions from buildings' energy consumption, the main provisions are a significant reduction of the office space, buildings renovation and improvement in energy efficiency. The Commission will constantly monitor how this can be further optimised.

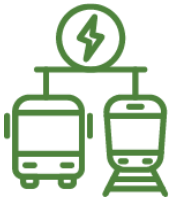
In Luxembourg, most departments should in principle move by 2026 into a new and energy-efficient building[29] (Jean Monnet 2) with dynamic collaborative space, a connection to the public cogeneration plant for heating, and a double-skin façade. As early as 2023, the Publications Office will change to a similar setting in another building.

In its five Joint Research Centre (JRC) sites outside Brussels, the Commission manages a wide portfolio of diverse buildings, including technical facilities. It will continue to adapt the different infrastructures to reduce their environmental impact by switching to more efficient energy and renovating some buildings.

In Member States, the buildings of the Commission Representations will be gradually included in the EMAS scope. Initial steps started in 2020. These sites are fully associated to the greening objectives, as they are the Commission's face in the Member States and Representations support EU policies in their daily tasks, including the European Green Deal. In addition, the buildings of the six executive agencies are gradually included in the EMAS scope as well.

The Commission also started to integrate the three dimensions of the **New European Bauhaus**[30] (sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion) in developing its presence and actions in its sites. For example, in Brussels, the renovation of the Commission Visitors' Centre will integrate these three dimensions and the Commission is already actively engaged in a partnership with the Brussels region in designing the new European Quarter and the new mobility plans. The New European Bauhaus values will also be reflected in the new constructions and refurbishment projects on the JRC sites[31].

The Commission will also carry out climate vulnerability and risk assessments (e.g. the change in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events) for the buildings on all its sites and will take reasonable preventive measures to address the identified risks, in line with the Commission's guidance on climate-proofing infrastructure[32] and other relevant guidelines[33]. These measures will include information to staff on potential climate change impacts affecting their work space and commuting to work, as well as on methods to enhance their preparedness and to adapt to those impacts.



Reduce business travels' emissions and use more sustainable modes of transport

The Commission staff need to keep strong visibility to develop EU policy. To prepare policies and ensure their implementation, it is key for Commission staff to meet a wide range of stakeholders, within the EU and beyond. Mobility has become one of the key enablers of the Commission to fulfil its duties. With the digitalisation of our ways of working and the development of soft or green mobility, the Commission will reduce the environmental impact linked to travels whilst ensuring that it continues to reach out to stakeholders, international partners, and the public.

Due to the nature of its duties and necessary events with its stakeholders, business travel by the Commission staff to Member States or non-EU countries and by national or international experts coming to events organised by the Commission has been a regular part of the Commission's way of working.

Staff business travel

In 2019, GHG emissions due to staff business travel[34] amounted to 60 803 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, representing about 28% of the Commission's GHG emissions. It is one of the activities that emits the most GHG emissions. By greening its mobility, the Commission wants not only to limit its environmental impact whilst maintaining its presence in the Member States and beyond, but also to set the example for its stakeholders that the new ways of working, mixing remote and in-person meetings, is of added value for the work itself.

The Commission expects that the measures set out in this Communication to reduce emissions linked to staff business trips and use greener methods of transport will reduce the emissions in this area by at least 50% compared to 2019 by 2024.

The restrictions on travel imposed by the COVID pandemic have increased the use of videoconferencing and online events as alternatives to business trips. During that period, the Commission has continued to work with stakeholders, using online tools. It will build on this experience, maintain a blended approach with sufficient physical meetings to ensure a good level of presence in the Member States and with the stakeholders. As each type of meeting has its added value and limitations (direct communication with the stakeholders when meeting in-person or wider public for videoconferencing or hybrid meetings[35]), each meeting should be assessed to determine the most appropriate format.

The Commission will provide its staff with the tools and support to allow them to organise efficiently and effectively, run, interpret and participate in virtual and hybrid meetings and events. In the 2022 budget, the Commission adapted expenditures to support this. It is also already transforming meeting spaces and upgrading its technological environment[36]. High-quality web and videoconferencing tools will provide optimal conditions for communicating in virtual and hybrid meetings, and with high-quality multilingual conference interpretation. It will also update its guidelines on organising sustainable events to ensure they cover both physical and remote events. The Commission created a yearly competition on sustainable conferences and events in 2020.

When business trips need to take place, the Commission will strongly encourage staff to limit their environmental impact. To implement this objective whilst ensuring an appropriate presence in the Member States, in non-EU countries and international organisations, the Commission will review its approach to business trips in 2022 and adopt a new legal framework. Until this revised framework is adopted and to start immediately the greening of its business travels, a behavioural pledge is expected, in 2022, from Directors-General representing their Commission department. This commitment will be made visible to all staff on the Commission's intranet. It will cover all business travel from staff and experts. Empowering each department to implement it according to its needs and

constraints will ensure that objectives are reached.

This pledge will include a blended way of working with stakeholders, shifting all non-essential missions[37] to video conferencing while maintaining some in-person missions or alternating hybrid meetings and meetings in-persons, in line with the following main principles:

- **Meetings and other events should be organised via videoconferencing** as much as possible; business travel should be well justified for legal, political or operational reasons. To allow for such essential missions to take place, it will be important that those regarded as less essential be done online or in a hybrid mode[38].
- **The number of staff travelling to attend the same event should be limited**, with attendance ensured via videoconferencing for those not travelling.
- **Where possible, journeys should be arranged in principle by train**, by electric vehicle or by car sharing.
- **Travel by flight should be justified** (e.g. distance, connection opportunities, schedule) and have the lowest environmental impact possible.

Based on this development of intelligent and smart missions, the Commission is confident that in 2022, it will again be able to connect directly with its stakeholders and the public, should there be no or limited restrictions on travel due to the pandemic.

Budgetary appropriations may be adjusted, to reflect the needs for green investments.

The Commission will also implement a similar approach for the business trips managed under operational budgets, such as justification of a business trip, limited number of participants, greener methods of transport. The objective is to ensure consistency of the approach for all types of business trips and contribute to setting a good example vis-à-vis the stakeholders and the public.

To monitor progress, the management information system for business travel (MiPS) has been updated to include information on the carbon footprint, which will be a very useful indicator and reminder for all those travelling. In a second phase, the system could also be used to indicate available alternative options with a lower carbon footprint.

The Commission will continue monitoring technological improvements to make use of these whenever appropriate.

External experts' travel

Travel by external experts to attend meetings, evaluation committees, conferences and other events represents an additional source of emissions arising from Commission activities. By working with them through both online and in-person meetings, the Commission will seek to inspire its partners towards blended way of working and greener mobility whilst maintaining a productive working relationship.

According to the feasibility and scoping study[39], GHG emissions arising from travel by external experts invited by the Commission and for whom it bears the travel costs represent approximately 30 000 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per year[40],

or 14% of the Commission's GHG emissions.

Using the experience gained as a result of mobility constraints during the COVID pandemic and working with Member States, the Commission will mirror the efforts made on staff business travel while respecting the existing legal framework[41], giving a greener interpretation to the latter and guaranteeing the necessary exchange of expertise. On that basis, the Commission will reduce gradually to 50% the level of GHG emissions compared to 2019, shifting a number of physical meetings to virtual or hybrid meetings. It will also see whether it is relevant to adapt the legal framework to introduce elements aiming at limiting the number of participants or leveraging sustainable transport. Similarly, participation to all Commission events and conferences should be offered as well online, so that the outreach to a wider range of stakeholders is enhanced.

It should be emphasised that this area will be gradually included in the EMAS scope. As a result, the related figures are not included in the current EMAS scope and are currently not verified and audited. The Commission is assessing the best way to monitor GHG emissions arising from external experts' participation in meetings and events organised by the Commission and for which it subsidises travel costs. A similar tool is being evaluated for assessing GHG emissions arising from the organisation of Commission conferences and events.

Increase green transport options for commuting

Staff commuting

In 2019, staff commuting represented 13 700 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, which accounted for around 6% of the Commission's carbon footprint. This is mainly due to the use of private cars. It should be noted that most of the Commission's sites are located in areas that are well-served by public transport and that the Commission staff are already using it frequently. Moving towards greener commuting is one of the tools that will further develop sustainable behaviours and contribute further to building a virtuous example for authorities in charge of infrastructures that citizens are eager to embrace a greener way of life.

With the increased use of telework impacting commuting, and the additional measures presented in this Communication, the Commission intends to reduce GHG emissions in this area by around 45% by 2030 compared to 2019.

In Brussels, which accounts for almost 85% of the emissions linked to commuting, the Commission is already implementing several measures to support greener commuting: partial reimbursement of season tickets for public transport; a fleet of Commission-owned conventional and electric bikes available for staff to use; facilities for all staff to make their commuting by bike easier (electric charging points and quality, accessible and safe infrastructures such as dressing rooms and showers); awareness campaigns and events, such as safe cycling courses and a yearly bike commuting challenge. The Commission will continue to adapt its infrastructure as a priority, including the installation of charging points for electric

vehicles, whenever possible, in accordance with the proposal for a revision of the energy performance of buildings Directive[42]. It will also maintain its dialogue with local authorities from all sites to improve mobility options and enhance safe mobility such as emphasising the importance of additional safe bike lanes to switch to greener mobility. The future organisation of the Brussels Schuman round-about is an example of close cooperation with the Brussels authorities promoting soft and greener mobility.

In Luxembourg, public transport is free in the whole country. The Commission subsidises cross-border transport passes for staff and offers free subscriptions to Vel'OH!, the bike service network of the City of Luxembourg, in addition to providing Commission service bicycles and facilities such as showers.

In addition, and in line with the measures recently implemented by local authorities, the Commission will adopt a new mobility plan in 2022 that increases incentives for the use of all sustainable methods of transport (e.g. new eco-hubs, improved fleet of Commission-owned bikes and an increased number of charging stations for electric vehicles). In Brussels, the Commission will also reduce gradually the availability of car parking spaces in its buildings by 2030, by at least 35% compared to 2019, pursuant to the implementation of regional legislation in Brussels (COBRACE[43]), transposing an EU Directive[44] into regional legislation. In Luxembourg, the planned moves into new office buildings will lead to a decrease in the number of parking spaces of 35% by 2026. The Commission will implement a digital tool to allocate parking space. With this smarter monitoring and planning, as well as with the increase of telework and of public transport or other sustainable means of transport, the reduction of car parking space by at least 35% is realistic.

Commission vehicles

The Commission is also keen to reduce emissions arising from its service vehicles even if in 2019 they represented less than 0.5% of the Commission's GHG emissions, accounting for 900 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent.

In Brussels[45] and Luxembourg, the Commission already uses electric or hybrid vehicles for logistics purposes. It intends to reach a point where 50% of its vehicles are zero- or low-emission vehicles by 2022. The transition to a fleet of zero-emission vehicles is planned to be completed by 2027 at the latest when all cars and vans will have been progressively replaced[46].

Optimise IT operations and assets

In 2019, IT equipment emitted 10 500 tonnes of CO2 equivalent, representing around 5% of the Commission's carbon footprint. IT is fundamental for staff to work, be it from the office or from home, or when interacting with stakeholders. This has become one of the central enablers of a green transition.

While taking into account the increasing need for digital solutions and the fast-changing IT environment, the Commission is confident that it will reduce GHG emissions arising from its digital operations and assets by at least 30% by 2030, compared to 2019. It will increase the lifetime of its equipment, promote repair, chose the best-in class products awarded by the EU Ecolabel and reduce waste. This will require measures to optimise IT operations and assets.

The increasing use of digital solutions allows for significant savings on other sources of emissions (buildings, business travel and commuting). It requires increased purchases of hardware, embodying GHG emissions from manufacturing, and an increased use of systems to store data for instance, leading to additional energy consumption and, ultimately, to potential extra GHG emissions depending on the source of the energy used[47].

Current industry measures for keeping the IT carbon footprint in check include work to streamline computing processes, switching increasingly to using renewable energy and investigating better ways to cool data centres and recycle their waste heat to avoid emissions elsewhere. In addition, good and service providers' own efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of their processes, assets and services will help the Commission achieve its objectives.

The commitment to a greener and more sustainable IT will also be reflected in the forthcoming Commission's internal digital strategy[48]. The Commission will mitigate the environmental impact of its increasing use of digital solutions by the following measures:

- Continuing to consolidate digital infrastructure into a limited number of corporate data centres and continuously improving their environmental efficiency, applying EU green public procurement (GPP) criteria[49] and the energy efficiency code of conduct for data centres[50]. The Commission will build on what it has already achieved in closing more than half of its local data rooms serving individual Directorates-General. In 2021, eight additional rooms have been closed. This allows financial savings on resources (posts, hardware and software) and leads to a smaller environmental footprint: a corporate data centre is clearly more energy-efficient than local data rooms and enables better use of capital investments such as hardware.

- Accelerating the shift to more energy-efficient devices, long lasting and repairable while limiting waste generation. For example, the Commission's main corporate data centre operation has recently joined the climate-neutral data centre pact[51].

- Encouraging market operators to reduce the environmental footprint of their operations, products and services through the use of GPP principles.

- Strengthening monitoring of the environmental footprint of all hardware and services procured in the future by introducing a reporting clause for good and service providers to give regularly footprint data using a methodology accepted by the Commission.

- Under the supervision of the Commission's IT and Cybersecurity

Board, carrying out an exercise to decommission obsolete systems and avoid unnecessary collection, retention and distribution of data, based on up-to-date tools and guidance to staff. This work is aligned with the Commission's digital preservation strategy[52] and action plan.

- Including to the greatest extent possible paperless workflow and digitalisation of archives.
- Insisting on the importance of limiting staff's individual digital carbon footprint and launching information campaigns to raise awareness and supporting greener digital behaviours, such as the extensive usage of collaborative tools and systematic deletion of unstored old emails (respecting document management rules).

Monitor and mitigate emissions from other sources

The Commission plays an active part in societal changes. It is thus logic that with this Communication it commits to continue to explore options for further GHG emission reductions and to ensure that it takes into account all new operations linked to its way of working.

To that end, the Commission will also include in the EMAS scope additional sources of emissions for which no structured information is available at this stage: for example, emissions arising from telework, from the activities of its Representations in Member States[53], or from external participants attending events for which it bears the travel costs[54]. Through this, the Commission will reinforce its monitoring and more clearly identify reduction targets for related GHG emissions.

The Commission will also follow the development of new concepts, such as a corporate carbon fee, and new low-carbon technologies to see if, how and when it could use these to reduce its environmental impact.

Finally, the Commission will ensure that executive agencies reduce their GHG emissions in line with this Communication, and support their efforts to implement EMAS by 2023.

Compensate for the remaining emissions with carbon removals

In addition to the ambitious set of GHG reduction actions, the Commission will have to rely also on carbon removals to neutralise unavoidable emissions and achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2030[55]. This will have a financial cost.

The Commission will strive to reduce GHG emissions as much as possible and will only rely on carbon removals to the smallest extent possible.

There is currently a lack of common standards for certification of high-quality carbon removals with real environmental benefits. To fill this gap, the Commission will propose a common EU regulatory framework on carbon removal certification[56] for the transparent identification and recognition of activities that unambiguously remove carbon from the atmosphere in a sustainable way.

In that context, and to prioritise measures that reduce emissions, the Commission does not intend to start procuring offset credits for carbon removal activities before 2030. It may re-assess the opportunity to launch preparatory pilot projects on carbon removals as part of its progress review, once the Commission has proposed a regulatory framework that will set the most robust and reliable criteria.

Supporting a green and circular economy

The Commission contributes to the circular economy by implementing GPP principles in its goods, services and work contracts and its everyday operations.

The Commission has developed EU GPP criteria for over 20 different sectors and products. It has already put these (and others) into place for many environmentally sensitive goods and services purchases, including ICT material, infrastructure and logistics, furniture and office supplies, catering goods and services, cleaning services and gardening services[57]. It also participates, together with other EU institutions, in an inter-institutional GPP helpdesk that provides advice to Commission services and will continue to promote its use.

To support a circular economy, the Commission will continue to broaden the use of GPP principles to cover all its procurement. It will also include additional requirements in its procurements processes, such as certification for products and services through EU Ecolabel (or equivalent) or registration of suppliers under a recognised environmental management system such as EMAS or ISO14001[58].

The Commission is seeking to prioritise in its tendering procedures options with the lowest environmental and social impact over their entire life cycle. It will gradually integrate greening aspects into its contract templates, improving guidance and training for staff.

When procuring physical equipment, including IT equipment, the Commission will seek longer contractual guarantees for the availability of replacement parts and the possibility of repairs. Together with information on the climate impact through embodied emissions and energy consumption, this will support optimising usage and replacement cycles for all types of equipment.

The Commission will improve its monitoring of how GPP criteria are implemented, through ICT tools that will automatically flag the opportunity to implement GPP criteria through the common procurement vocabulary classification, involving green experts at the appropriate stage of the contracting workflow.

The Commission will also continue to explore the market to track green innovative solutions and make its procurement approach more visible, so as to influence the market.

In parallel, and to contribute further to the circular economy, the Commission will pay particular attention to waste management, including repairing, reusing and recycling when waste cannot be avoided.

Preserving and restoring nature and biodiversity

The Commission considers preserving biodiversity as a key element of its greening activities and has already launched several ecosystem and biodiversity programmes, in particular in its non-urban sites. For example:

- The JRC-Petten site is one of the greenest sites of the Commission with more than 80% of the site left for wildlife to roam free. Part of the site is counted as a Natura 2000 'dry heath' habitat.
- In Ispra, projects to restore and protect native trees are planned in order to enhance biodiversity and develop the site's natural heritage.
- In Luxembourg, the future Jean Monnet 2 building has spaces that promote biodiversity.

The Commission will continue to develop and implement these initiatives to preserve and restore ecosystems and their biodiversity, including protected habitat and species, and in particular in Natura 2000 protected areas close to its rural and urban sites.

Urban sites have much potential for investment in green and blue infrastructure[59] delivering multiple benefits, including for climate mitigation and adaptation purposes. In particular, this makes them more resilient to the impacts of climate change such as summer heatwaves. In relevant locations for such programmes, there have been volunteer-led efforts in the Commission and other EU institutions to develop small scale initiatives, such as herbal or vegetable gardens in some buildings which could be brought to a new scale. The Commission will install green infrastructure such as green roofs, green walls or gardens in its buildings where this is technically feasible and relevant, for the benefit of biodiversity and the enjoyment of its staff. In this context, the installation of facilities to attract fauna (such as nesting birds or pollinators) will be considered.

The Commission is evaluating how it can implement additional related actions, especially in Brussels, where it has launched a study on the various options for improving biodiversity in its building portfolio and close surroundings. This may include investing, together with local authorities, in restoration activities in Natura 2000 sites. The Commission will also contribute to tree planting activities in its urban sites, contributing to the wider EU pledge to plant 3 billion trees by 2030 under ecological principles. The Commission is party to the redesign of the European Quarters by the Brussels region, notably through the partial rewilding of the valley of the Maelbeek stream that runs through the heart of the district.

Promoting a fair, healthy sustainable and good food system

The Commission has already taken measures to limit the environmental impact of its catering services through, for example, reducing the use of single use items (including plastics), and providing the footprint information for meals. It also raises awareness amongst staff of the environmental impact linked to food, meals, waste and packaging.

From 2022, the Commission will start the process for its canteens and cafeterias in Brussels to be certified under the 'Good Food' label developed by the Brussels Region[60]. In Luxembourg, all canteens are already awarded the *SuperDrecksKëscht fir Betriber*[61] label for environmentally sound waste management. In other sites, such as Petten or Geel, similar actions are taken. The Commission will embed GPP criteria in the future contract for food supply, as well as requirements for quality, healthy and sustainable food, bio, fair-trade and short supply chains, as well as food waste reduction including information about meals' climate and environmental footprint for the customers, a smarter management of food supply, better logistics and recycling food through different distribution channels.

The Commission will study and implement actions to further reduce or remove single-use items, particularly from catering, meetings and conferences. More generally, it will update its internal approach to food and catering when organising events, meetings and conferences to improve their sustainability. Sharing best practices with other institutions and national administrations will be very useful.

4. STAFF PARTICIPATION AS EU CITIZENS SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

For the Communication to succeed, staff engagement to implement the actions is key. This also goes hand in hand with adopting sustainable ways of working and behaviour, with which many are already familiar. The Commission recognises and encourages its staff to be innovative and embrace changes in ways of working with the ambition of setting a good example in implementing new innovative green solutions.

To support and enhance further this process, the Commission will:

- develop further communication campaigns, training and workshops about climate change and protection of biodiversity, other Green Deal related policies and the link to personal behaviours. The Commission will base its action on what is already in place, such as "EMAS basics for all". Existing and future training will be adapted to include visibly the new objectives and contribute to the understanding of the necessary decarbonisation of the ways of working. For example, current training on calls for tender will emphasise more the integration of green criteria in future contracts;

- continue to organise relevant information sessions or programmes and discussions on topics such as climate protection, energy, sustainable mobility, healthy and sustainable diets, including with external high-level speakers. It will put in place a dedicated library accessible to all with relevant materials;

- update and further develop its internal website and encourage the use or creation of local interactive communication tools to exchange information and practical tips on topics related to climate neutrality, the Green Deal or practical behavioural change such as information on the carbon footprint of food.

- integrate current and new actions involving staff in its existing networks to accompany staff in their behavioural transition. Each staff member will have the opportunity to share experience and encourage new behaviours.

Greening the Commission will influence the way the Commission works with all its stakeholders, in all places of employment. It will thus be important to associate them in defining new ways of working together as the working relationship needs to be adapted according to the climate neutrality objective of the Commission. For example, the Commission will continue supporting the greening of the European Schools, for instance for the school transport managed by the "associations of parents of students of the European Schools". The local impact of switching to zero emission buses is in line with efforts undertaken by the host cities and will help set an example for school bus transportation. It will also be important that the Commission staff defines together with relevant counterparts the objectives of virtual, hybrid or and in-person meetings. This is also a practical way to associate counterparts beyond the Commission staff members in the implementation of climate neutrality. Explaining the objectives and actions of this Communication to stakeholders and getting their support will contribute to creating the path for the global transition to climate-neutrality. It will also be a key instrument for the communication with citizens.

As acknowledged by the Climate Pact[62], citizens' awareness and active participation in individual and collective action aimed at minimising or reducing GHG emissions in our daily life is crucial. As committed citizens, some Commission staff are already involved in such activities (e.g. the EU Cycling Group[63], EU Staff for climate[64],...). Further incentives

will be proposed, both individually and collectively at the service level. Staff are invited to forward their individual pledge through the "Count Us In" system and act as "climate ambassadors" under the Climate Pact.

The Commission has already and will continue to have a strong culture of dialogue with staff to exchange and disseminate ways to integrate greener habits in order to limit the environmental impact of their activities and behaviours including when teleworking: for example, annual campaigns on waste reduction, on mobility, bring your own cup' action and stressing the importance of switching off unused equipment or reporting leaks. Local projects of services can also lead to greener habits, such as the installation of tap water supply on each floor.

The Commission also carries out regular internal surveys to evaluate staff knowledge, behaviour and motivation, as part of which staff can suggest how to make the Commission greener[65]. In addition, ongoing two-way communication between staff and the Commission's EMAS experts is well established and will continue to be enhanced.

Staff engagement to implement the actions set in this Communication is key

Finally, as part of its corporate social responsibility measures, the Commission is developing several green and social activities helping groups of volunteers to include social activities alongside environmental ones and introducing purely 'green volunteering' actions as part of the 'Volunteer for a Green Change' initiative.

5. COMMUNICATE ON GREEN ACTIONS

Greening the Commission and achieving corporate climate neutrality by 2030 is intended to set a good example and raise awareness of the need for ambitious climate action at all levels. The Commission's green actions are also fully part of the Human Resources strategy as a key priority to increase further the attractiveness of the Commission as an employer.

It is essential for the Commission to report and communicate promptly, comprehensively and effectively on the implementation of this Communication and more largely on all the environmental improvements the Commission is making. These outreach activities will provide the public and business with suggestions on how to move to greener solutions in the context of the Green Deal. Established programmes like Back to School/Back to University, or events like the Open Day[66] of the European institutions, where staff directly participate, should be opportunities to inform people in the EU of the objectives and actions in this Communication. The Commission will prepare materials to illustrate its actions and contribute to raising awareness.

In addition, events around the Green Deal are being organised and will be enhanced in the Member States, with the support of the network of Commission

Representations, and possibly working with the European Parliament Liaison Offices, to share experience and good practices and promote local and individual initiatives.

The Commission will strive to associate other EU institutions and organisations on its path of modernisation and decarbonisation. It will continue to exchange good practices with other national, EU and international organisations and administrations, such as the EU Public Administration Network (EUPAN) on the way they develop their greening strategies. It will encourage the network of 144 EU Delegations to join local or national actions, such as the EU's Permanent Delegation to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva, which are part of the '2050 Today' initiative[67].

The Commission will reinforce the inter-institutional cooperation with EU institutions and bodies through the Interinstitutional Environmental Management Group which it already chairs, in order to disseminate and discuss best practices and develop common approaches and actions to improve greening in the institutions. In this framework, the Commission will encourage further the institutions not yet EMAS registered to become so. It will also seek to develop a common approach on inter alia the climate impact of teleworking that needs to be quantified and mitigated, and biodiversity. It will continue to initiate and chair the inter-institutional EMAS days and strive to increase visibility and reach out to a wider audience.

As a member of the greening network of decentralised agencies, the Commission will present its objectives and actions for a climate neutral institution and exchange best practices with the agencies.

The Commission considers it essential to use all opportunities given through its work with counterparts and thanks to the multitude of stakeholders it regularly meets, to give visibility not only to its actions for a climate neutral institution, but to also learn from other practices and stimulate the global journey towards a sustainable society. Experience in involving and committing staff will be of particular interest as their role and buy-in is critical.

6. PROGRESS REVIEW

To implement and monitor progress on this Communication, the Commission will build on the existing internal EMAS governance[68] and the strategic and programming cycle. The Commission's Corporate Management Board will also steer the implementation of these greening measures by providing regular strategic advice.

The implementation of this Communication should be agile and flexible, allowing it to integrate rapidly developing scientific evidence and policies and adapt its measures along the way. The Commission will also continue monitoring emerging technological and operational developments to see how to

use these to increase the level of ambition for its environmental performance.

In the coming years, the Commission will need to set out its longer-term strategy to 2030 on compensating remaining in-house emissions with certified carbon removals, in line with developments in the regulatory framework.

In addition, the Commission will assess and monitor the environmental impact of its new ways of working, in particular increased teleworking.

The Commission commits to evaluate and, adapt the Communication actions and targets where necessary, in 2024. It will also undertake a final evaluation and consider lessons learnt for the post-2030 follow-up.

7. CONCLUSIONS

To identify the actions set out in this Communication, the Commission looked thoroughly at every aspect of its activities, with support from experts and the involvement of its staff. It explored different options to see how fast it could reduce its GHG emissions in a realistic and evidence-based way, taking into account the substantial emissions reduction already achieved.

As a result, the Commission is confident that in the next decade, it can further reduce the GHG emissions arising from its operations by 60% compared to 2005. It will secure high-quality certified carbon removals for the remainder of its emissions to become climate neutral by 2030 and deliver on the other areas of the Green Deal.

Through the implementation of this Communication, the Commission wants to demonstrate that a European public administration can pro-actively contribute to a more sustainable society. This will require a collective commitment of all staff, at all levels, in all places of employment.

This Communication, in combination with the new Commission strategy for human resources, will support staff in moving towards greener, more digital and sustainable ways of working.

While implementing the actions outlined in this Communication, the Commission will hold regular discussions with Member States, in particular the countries that host its main sites.

ENDNOTES

[1] COM(2019) 640 final, Communication from the Commission, The European Green Deal.

[2] Statement by the President on delivering the European Green Deal (europa.eu).

[3] This Communication uses 2005 as a reference year to assess the changes in GHG emissions linked to the Commission's operations, unlike Member States who use 1990 as a baseline, as explained in Annex A. 2005 is the first year for which the Commission has verified data, for a limited scope of activities. The Commission made retroactive calculations of the GHG emission of its activities covered under the 2019 EMAS scope. This result was used to assess the scale of efforts to be made until 2030 to reach the objective.

[4] Extrapolating this to the level of GHG emissions in the EU in 1990, this would represent a drop of at least 65%. This rough extrapolation uses the overall trends of GHG emissions in the European Union between 1990 and 2005, and is for illustrative purposes only.

[5] The Commission's level of ambition cannot be directly compared to the EU Green deal targets for Member States. The Member State targets are based on the direct emissions figures and projections used in the assessment of EU climate policy, including the Climate Target Plan that underlies the 2030 EU target, whereas the Commission's target was set using the corporate EMAS framework, which is used to measure the Commission's environmental performance. In addition, the scope of the Commission's activities and emissions cannot be directly compared to those of a Member State or the EU-27. See also Annex A, footnote 13 for more details.

[6] Communication "A Renovation Wave for Europe – greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives", COM(2020) 662 final.

[7] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the energy performance of buildings (recast), COM(2021) 802 final.

[8] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on energy efficiency (recast), COM(2021) 558 final.

[9] Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, COM(2021) 557 final.

[10] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, COM(2020) 380 final.

[11] Other policies cover inter alia the revision of key climate and energy legislation, the circular economy action plan, the strategy for sustainable and smart mobility, the farm to fork strategy, the green taxonomy. These proposals contain specific objectives for different categories of actors, one of which is the public sector (including the Commission). For

example, the Commission proposes that in the public sector, all new public buildings must be zero-emission as of 2027. More information can be found in the relevant press releases: Renovation and decarbonisation of buildings (europa.eu)

[12] See Annex A "Using EMAS achievements to provide detailed reporting and comparison".

[13] EMAS is regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1221/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the voluntary participation by organisations in a Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS).

[14] EMAS – Environment - European Commission (europa.eu).

[15] Geographical expansion of EMAS in Brussels: from 8 buildings in 2005 to around 60 buildings since 2014 by which time a further seven Commission sites in Europe were added.

[16] For example, GHG emissions from fixed assets (also called "embedded emissions"), purchased goods and services or own waste have been included since 2018.

[17] Glossary:Carbon dioxide equivalent - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)

[18] Some emissions, estimated at approx. 5% of the total emissions, were not reported in the 2020 environmental report for technical reasons. They were included in the 2021 report resulting in slightly different figures for 2021. See 2021 Environmental Statement.

[19] This estimate was done in the framework of the 'feasibility and scoping study for the European Commission to become climate neutral by 2030' implemented by Ramboll and CO_2 Logic, for the European Commission, Directorate-General for Climate Action on behalf of the EMAS Steering Committee. The figures have not gone through the EMAS verification and audit scheme.

[20] See footnote 19.

[21] These include the installation of better videoconferencing facilities, the upgrade of buildings to comply with stricter environmental permits, the use of cleaner energy, the creation of incentives to reduce commuting by car, etc.).

[22] Laboratories, large technical installations, industrial facilities and nuclear installations.

[23] The Joint Research Centre has 6 sites: Brussels, Ispra, Geel, Karlsruhe, Petten, Sevilla. JRC offices in Brussels are part of the total of Brussels.

[24] COM(2020) 662 final.

[25] COM(2021) 557 final.

[26] C(2022) 1788.

[27] COM(2020) 662 final. It aims to at least double the annual renovation rate by 2030, to foster deep energy renovation and mobilise forces at all levels towards these goals.

[28] For instance, on the Commission site in Geel, the JRC intends to connect to a geothermal installation. This would allow to cover 90% of its heating/cooling needs. On the Commission site in Ispra, the JRC already uses geothermal, solar and thermal energy.

[29] BREEAM Excellent certification. BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) is a sustainability assessment method that is used to masterplan projects, infrastructure and buildings.

[30] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions '*New European Bauhaus: Beautiful, Sustainable, Together',* COM(2021) 573 final, 15 September 2021.

[31] It will use Level(s), the EU common language for the sustainability performance of buildings when applicable.

[32] Commission Notice — Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027 - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

[33] See footnote 31 for Level(s) information.

[34] This includes professional travel by staff in the eight EMAS registered sites, excluding staff in representations, delegations and executive agencies.

[35] A hybrid meeting is a meeting where some of the participants meet in person and others join the meeting online.

[36] Since 2019, around 500 meeting rooms have been refurbished in Brussels, of which almost half being equipped for hybrid meetings/events in 2021.

[37] Non-essential missions are those conducted for other reasons than legal obligations, political or operational, such as, for example those done to deliver a keynote speech or authorised travel.

[38] According to an internal survey conducted in summer 2020, services estimated that about 30% of their business trips were conducted for non-essential missions (for other reasons than legal obligations, political or operational, such as, for example those done to deliver a keynote speech or authorised travel).

[39] See footnote 19.

[40] This estimate is based on the feasibility and scoping study. The study also refers to GHG emissions arising from all other visitors, representing approximately 40 000 tonnes of GHG emissions per year. These are not covered by this Communication since the Commission is not responsible for organising or financing such travels or visits. This figure is not verified and audited by EMAS.

[41] Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the rules and general principles concerning mechanisms for control by Member States of the Commission's exercise of implementing powers and Commission Decision C(2016)3301 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission expert groups.

[42] COM(2021) 802 final.

[43] COBRACE: Code Bruxellois de l'air, du climat et de la maîtrise de l'énergie. It aims to reduce GHG emissions and manage energy consumption efficiently.

[44] Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

[45] The Commission's fleet in Brussels includes 128 vehicles, including vehicles for members of the College (29), vehicles assigned to Directors-General (28) and to the pool serving senior management based on need (44 including mini-buses), and vehicles for logistics (14) and security (13).

[46] The Commission will actively monitor developments in the market and gradually replace those vehicles (mini-vans, armoured or semi-armoured vehicles) where there is currently no electric version, subject to availability on the market for certain type of cars like armoured vehicles.

[47] Energy consumption linked to the use of IT equipment falls in the category of building consumption.

[48] The current European Commission digital strategy is under review and will be replaced with an updated version in the first semester of 2022.

[49] EU GPP Criteria for cleaning services (europa.eu)

[50] Code of Conduct for Energy Efficiency in Data Centres | EU Science Hub (europa.eu)

[51] Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact – The Green Deal need Green Infrastructure

[52] 2020(SEC) 850 'Digital preservation strategy'.

[53] Started in 2021.

[54] For the latter, this Communication uses information from the feasibility and scoping study. To be included in the EMAS, data will have to be verified and audited.

[55] Any organisation needs at least one headquarters/office building and IT devices, and some commuting and professional travel, whose associated carbon emissions will eventually need to be removed.

[56] COM(2021) 800 'Sustainable Carbon Cycles'.

[57] For example, the OIB followed a 'green classified' procedure for the selection and award phases of an acquisition contract for a conference centre, worth more than EUR 250 million, signed in 2021. The future building will be classified as passive, according to an international leading sustainability assessment method: Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). The OIB and OIL systematically use GPP criteria for the procurement of service contracts for waste management.

[58] ISO 14001 sets out the criteria for an environmental management system and can be certified. It maps out a framework that a company or organisation can follow to set up an effective environmental system.

[59] Green Infrastructure - Environment - European Commission (europa.eu)

[60] Le portail Good Food | Good Food

[61] Accueil - SuperDreckskëscht (sdk.lu)

[62] https://europa.eu/climate-pact/

[63] https://eucg.eu/

[64] https://eustaff4climate.info

[65] The 2021 EMAS survey show that the environmental awareness of staff are on the rise. About half of the respondents provided suggestions and comments for improvements, mainly on mobility and buildings.

[66] Note that the EMAS experts of the Commission are already represented during the Open Day of the European Institutions.

[67] '2050 Today' is a Swiss-led initiative bringing together a community of international institutions determined to ensure a quick, continuous and measurable GHG emission reductions of their own institutions.

[68] Commission Decision C(2013) 7708.