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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

MOBILITY PLAN FOR COMMISSION STAFF IN BRUSSELS 2006-2009

1. THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Order of 25 March 1999 of the *Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale* (*Ministry of the Brussels Capital Region*) on evaluating and improving air quality¹ and its enacting Decree of 5 February 2004 require all bodies with more than 200 staff to introduce a transport plan.

The Commission believes sustainable development to be one of the European Union's key objectives and has worked on a voluntary basis to this end since 1997. Working in close cooperation with the Brussels Capital Region, the Commission has thus supported its initiatives to promote the use of public transport and to encourage the use of other sustainable means of transport, bicycles in particular, and so send a strong message to its staff on environmental protection.

Measures so far have focused on work-related trips between the Commission's various buildings. However, the EUROBUS facility, available to staff since 1998, has had both a direct and an indirect effect on staff journeys between home and the office, especially in the case of those living close to routes 21 and 22, and has helped to promote public transport. The last mobility survey indicated that almost 25% of Commission staff come to work and/or return home by bus, metro or tram.

In its Communication of 10 December 2003 on buildings policy and infrastructure in Brussels, the Commission expressed its wish to diversify and expand its activities with a view to creating a better balance between the professional and private lives of its staff, also by improving transport conditions and by significantly reducing the use of individual vehicles for journeys to work and back.

This Communication provides the Commission with a mobility plan for its staff, covering the period 2006-2009 and involving both journeys between its various sites (including between Brussels and Luxembourg) and buildings and journeys between home, the social infrastructure (nurseries), schools (the European schools in particular) and the workplace.

The Communication is based on the discussion of the Joint Working Party on mobility in the second half of 2004 and includes some of their proposals for action. It follows a general survey to the Commission staff launched in 2004.

Based on the support of its staff and relying on the commitment of every staff member, the Commission wants its sites to develop in harmony with its social, environmental and energy policies. The working conditions of its staff, including the issue of transport and mobility, are one way of achieving this.

¹ Published in the *Moniteur Belge* on 24 June 1999.

It has always been committed to its policy on mobility and still is, this plan forming part of the Brussels legislative framework and being designed to help improve transport as part of the Brussels Region's urban and mobility policy.

That said, the plan's impact depends to a great extent on the accompanying measures that the Region must quickly take and on a significant improvement in transport provision by the various operators concerned.

In its White Paper on European Transport Policy for 2010², the Commission believes that making people switch from private cars to public transport will require a whole series of accompanying measures, including in particular:

- adequate flexibility in public transport systems, in particular in outer suburban areas where journeys are harder to organise and complete;
- a town-planning and urban policy that allows for smooth transitions during journeys (parking places near the main train, metro and bus stations, allowing commuters to switch from their car to public transport; the planning of public transport in such a way that intermodal travel is possible over short distances, etc.);
- measures to ensure the comfort, quality, speed and safety of public transport.

It should be noted that some of these measures were taken on board by the STIB/MIVB in its June 2004 memorandum to the Brussels Capital regional government, and in its document "STIB 2020, visions for the future of public transport in Brussels".

In September 2005, the SNCB group presented an ambitious investment plan to the "Ministère des Travaux Publics" (Ministry of Public Works) for the period of 2005-2007. The companies belonging to this group of railway operators will invest €4789 million over a three-year period, in an effort to provide a better service and meet growing capacity needs.

It is for the Government of the Brussels Capital Region to introduce the necessary accompanying measures both up- and downstream of these plans if the impact of the efforts made by employers and their staff is to be felt.

2. MOBILITY MEASURES ALREADY INTRODUCED AND THEIR IMPACT (1997-2005)

The mobility measures undertaken since 1997 were included in:

- the Fifth Community Programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development, which saw mobility management as one of the key challenges for sustainable development;
- the Commission Decision of 16 July 1997 on environmental issues in the administration of the Commission, which advocated the need for a mobility policy and set a certain number of targets, including one to reduce the number of

² COM (2001)370, 12.09.2001

journeys made by private car and to promote alternative, environment-friendly forms of transport.

The introduction of this policy also coincided with the abolition on 1st January 1998 of the tax-free petrol allowance given to some officials making work-related journeys.

2.1. The facilities put in place

Three approaches have been encouraged: public transport, the use of bicycles and the purchase of 'clean' cars, electric ones in particular.

2.1.1. The use of public transport has been encouraged through three separate but complementary projects:

- the December 1997 introduction of EUROBUS, consisting of two bus routes (Nos 21 and 22) serving most of the buildings of the Commission and other European institutions in Brussels;
- the No 12 (shuttle) route, linking the European Quarter to Zaventem national airport;
- the Brussels Business Pass (BBP) for work-related trips, in particular those made by staff at the Beaulieu site, offering free access to part of the Demey/Arts-Loi metro line. These passes have since been replaced by a new facility called "One Way Tickets".

2.1.2. Bicycle use has been especially encouraged. Parking spaces for bicycles have been increased from close to 300 in 1999 to over 2 000 today by taking over car-parking spaces; most of the buildings are gradually being equipped with the necessary facilities (cloakrooms, showers, marking out of cycle paths, etc.). The use of service bicycles (some 150 at present) is on the increase (they were used about 15 000 times in 2005).

2.1.3. Lastly, the Commission has bought four electric service cars for certain technicians required to travel frequently over short distances between the Commission's various buildings.

2.2. Changes in transport habits between 1998 and 2004

The survey made of Commission staff in Brussels on 26 March 2004 (to which over 7 500 persons responded, i.e. 38% of all staff, 54% of them female) confirmed an ongoing shift that was already evident in the three surveys carried out since 1998. Thus, since then, for journeys between work and home and vice-versa:

- private car use has fallen from 50% to 44%;
- public transport use has risen from 32% to 38%;
- walking or cycling has remained constant at 17%;
- car-pooling and recourse to taxis remains marginal at 1%.

Almost a third (31%) say that the facilities provided have changed their habits.

In the case of work-related journeys, walking, cycling (using service or personal bicycles) and public transport (the EUROBUS in particular) are now preferred over the car.

3. THE COMMISSION'S MOBILITY PLAN 2006-2009

3.1. Strategy

The strategy for developing staff mobility must secure staff acceptance and participation and aim to achieve:

- (1) the smooth operation of the Commission;
- (2) a balance between work and life;
- (3) the right and due response to the challenges posed by the increase of transport by car in the Brussels Region and hence active participation in environmental protection;
- (4) compliance with the requirements of the new urban and mobility policy recently defined by the Region (and its consequences for car parks);
- (5) consolidation and better cooperation between all the European institutions based in Brussels, given their shared objectives and comparable strengths and weaknesses. This means intensifying existing cooperation and designing and developing joint initiatives at an agreed pace and to an agreed timetable.

It must also:

- significantly encourage the use of public transport for all staff movements;
- follow the lines of the Commission Communication of 10 December 2003 on buildings and infrastructure policy.

Experience with mobility shows that the best option involves a balance between measures which are found attractive (“pull”) and those which are imposed (“push”), thus enabling staff to choose their form of transport freely and rationally.

The options chosen to meet all these challenges and obligations must therefore encourage greater use of public transport, more initiatives on two-wheel (especially bicycle) usage - without forgetting other alternative forms of transport such as car-pooling - and, lastly, a reform of the way in which the Commission's car parks are managed.

3.2. Targets

The Commission accepts the working party's proposal to set ambitious targets.

It has taken particular note of the fact that 10% of private vehicle users say that they would be ready to change their form of transport. Indeed, 23% would stop using private cars if a parking fee were introduced, provided that the Commission makes a generous contribution towards the cost of a public transport season ticket.

The targets, which largely depend on a general improvement in the provision of public transport, are for the 2006-09 period and aim to:

- Reduce until 2009 single-person private car use from its current 44% level to 35%;
- increase the share of public-transport use from 38% to 45% and increase that of bicycle use and walking from 17% to 19%;
- increase car-pooling by 50% between now and 2009;
- increase the use of public transport (train in particular) for journeys between sites, namely between Brussels and Luxemburg.

3.3. Priorities

The priorities recommended are specific to Brussels because of the Region's specific legislation on urban matters and particular local and/or more general problems of mobility.

3.3.1. Promotion of public transport

Public transport is quite obviously the option to be most encouraged. It currently accounts for 38% of private journeys (58% by the STIB/MIVB/De Lijn/TEC and 42% by the SNCB/NMBS). Increasing its share depends on a number of factors, including a significant upgrade in public transport provision (operating times and frequency notably after 19h, safety, etc.), the encouragement of more intensive use of public transport through a contribution towards season ticket costs in particular³ and changes in the way parking capacity is managed.

The average annual cost of a car park space has been put at €1.300/year. This cost, which is supported by the Commission, is to be compared with the cost of a STIB MTB (Metro-Tram-Bus) season ticket (€400/year) or of a SNCB season ticket (from €265 to €1258/year) currently paid entirely by staff having chosen to use public transport (38 %).

Staff holding car parking permits would therefore have to choose between the benefits of the contribution by the Commission to the cost of season tickets against access to Commission building car parks. It will be possible to change their decision and to abandon the option of the season ticket. Exceptional situations (e.g. public transport strikes, crises...) will be handled case by case. Solutions will be found for individual situations that could require a punctual access to car parking, be it for professional or personal reasons.

Such contribution to the cost of season tickets (a 50% contribution of actual costs is initially proposed, up to a 60km limit in the case of train journeys) will depend on money being available, however.

The Metro-Tram-Bus (MTB) season ticket, incorporating the STIB/MIVB/De Lijn/TEC and SNCB/NMBS networks serving the greater Brussels area, is enough to

³ Belgian legislation requires the private sector to contribute at least 60%; the Flanders Region pays the full cost of public transport for its staff.

cover the transport needs of over two-thirds of Commission staff living within a 20km radius. The March 2004 survey shows that some 5 000 officials and other servants are already eligible for such a season ticket.

Reaching a contractual agreement with the STIB/MIVB is feasible. This agreement, to be negotiated as a service contract at a preferential rate, would cover all work-related staff movements and individual season ticket subscriptions to the MTB network. The Commission would pay for and manage the scheme and would recoup from its staff that share of the subscription falling outside the scope of the mobility plan.

The agreement with the STIB/MIVB to continue the EUROBUS facility (free access to routes 21 and 22 upon presentation of a staff card) was renewed on 1 April 2005 for a further four-year period. Service has been improved on the No 22 route, with frequency increasing from 3 to 4 buses an hour, and an evening service up to 19.30. This initiative, which has been very well received by staff, will shortly take on an interinstitutional dimension with the European Parliament's plan to join it in 2006.

In addition, the STIB/MIVB has committed itself to keeping to its timetables more often across the network (one of the most frequently voiced complaints against it) and to providing better information by way of electronic information boards at all bus stops.

Train use must also be strongly encouraged. This form of transport is the best suited to lengthy journeys. The SNCB/NMBS will also be asked to improve the quality of its service, particularly as regards operating to timetables and its connections to the STIB/MIVB network.

3.3.2. A new approach to parking

The latest Brussels Region legislation on urban and mobility policy will impose new constraints by significantly reducing the ratio between office floor space and the number of available car parking spaces. The legislation will apply to all new or refurbished buildings. It will thus eventually affect the Commission directly. A review of car parking management will be considered on a needs-analysis basis and on the actual recorded rate of parking-space occupation in the buildings. It will imply a progressive decrease in the number of car parking places available in all Commission buildings. It will take account of policies in favour of the disabled and equal opportunities; particular attention will be paid to parents, notably those with young children.

The principle of free access will be retained under the conditions outlined in point 3.3.1.

3.3.3. Bicycles and other two-wheeled vehicles

Some 6% of journeys are made using two-wheeled vehicles. Recourse to this form of transport – bicycles in particular – is expected to increase, as illustrated by the ever growing number of spaces reserved for bicycles in the car parks and the increasing success of service bicycles. The mobility survey confirms that many more car users could still be convinced to switch to this form of transport. It is therefore essential for the Brussels Capital Region to extend – as agreed in the 1995 Regional Development Plan – its network of continuous and safe cycle paths. Wishing to encourage

intermodal transport, the STIB/MIVB has made provision for combining cycling and public transport, particularly in the metro. The SNCB/NMBS intends to do the same in certain stations, Schuman and Luxembourg in particular. Similarly to the Brussels-Capital Region, the Commission will actively assist in the promotion of this intermodality. The measures taken by the Commission to encourage greater use of two-wheeled vehicles, and in particular of bicycles, will continue (increase of bicycle stands in the parking, showers, cloakrooms, service bicycles, etc.).

3.3.4. *Car-pooling*

This still marginal activity will be properly encouraged, particularly through the provision of a dedicated website bringing current and/or potential car-poolers into contact with each other. Information and awareness campaigns will be organised and better links will be forged with the various car-pooling associations.

3.3.5. *“Clean” cars*

In line with its White Paper on transport policy and its proposal for a Directive on the promotion of clean road transport vehicles⁴, the Commission will continue to encourage, , including by its staff, of low-polluting, low-fuel-consumption cars, and even 'clean cars', based on technological developments and the ability of these cars to meet its needs. They will be EURO 4 compliant.

The Commission's fleet of service cars will be gradually replaced with diesel cars equipped with a particle filter, as market availability allows. They will respect the EURO 4 norm standard.

Technical (and similar) services required to make many short trips between the institutions' various buildings will be equipped with small cars with limited CO₂ emission factors (less than 140 g for petrol cars and less than 130 g for diesel cars equipped with a particle filter) unless they can continue to use electric vehicles discontinued by manufacturers.

3.3.6. *Other potential priorities*

Two other measures that the Commission plans to put in place during 2006 could have a positive, albeit limited, impact on mobility policy.

Firstly, "teleworking" should allow some members of staff to reduce travelling to the workplace.

Secondly, flexitime should have an impact on the hours of arrival and departure, thus helping to reduce traffic jams during peak hours. Similarly, a reduction in core time could lead to slightly fewer journeys to and from work.

3.4. **Accompanying measures**

A partnership approach to urban policy is needed. To this end, cooperation with the Brussels Capital Region is now structural. The appointment of a High Representative

⁴ COM(2005)634 final, 21/12/2005

responsible for coordination between the Region and the European institutions is in keeping with this approach.

The cooperation that already exists in this respect with the other European institutions located in Brussels will be improved.

Staff, through the Local Staff Committee in particular, will be regularly informed of the plan's implementation.

On 1 November 2004, a new "Transport and Mobility" Unit was set up in the OIB to implement and manage the mobility plan, including relations with the transport providers, various associations and cycling groups.

Particular attention will be paid to issues of staff information and awareness. The main measures will be a 'mobility' website and a periodic newsletter giving staff all the practical information available, maps in all building entrances showing how to reach other buildings, and an internet link to the timetables of all public transport providers.

These measures will be supplemented by targeted information leaflets and one-off awareness campaigns.

Promotional measures will be undertaken with associations to increase cycling and with transport providers to encourage intermodal use of trains, trams, buses and bicycles.

3.5. The mobility plan's various stages

Given that the budget resources that will be finally allocated to the plan are not yet known, two successive stages are planned.

3.5.1. Stage 1

The measures developed over recent years will be continued and extended, in particular the EUROBUS and bicycle use.

This will involve, in particular:

- cooperating even more closely with the STIB/MIVB to improve service provision and its adjustment to user needs;
- adopting the same approach to the SNCB/NMBS;
- implementing dynamic management of reserved car parks, including a reduction in the number of parking spaces available;
- intensifying staff information and awareness campaigns;
- consolidating interinstitutional cooperation in an effort to develop and implement a concerted common action plan in this field;
- having regular contact with the Brussels Capital Region.

3.5.2. *Stage 2*

Stage one will be supplemented by a 50% (real cost) contribution to public transport season tickets (STIB/MIVB, De Lijn, TEC, SNCB/NMBS), as from 2007 and till 2009 included. The OIB will manage STIB/MIVB subscriptions in close collaboration with the PMO. In 2007, the 'One Way Ticket' service will be revised to meet new identified needs, taking into account the expected increase in STIB season ticket subscriptions.

3.6. **Periodical evaluation of the Mobility Plan**

The Commission services will periodically evaluate the present Mobility Plan in particular through surveys to the Commission staff in Brussels. In particular the impact of the system of the contribution to the cost of season tickets will be assessed at the end of 2007 against the objective of reducing the use of private vehicles. If the objective is not reached, additional measures will be proposed for adoption by the College in the beginning 2008, that could foresee both more restrictive and more attractive measures, within the budgetary availability.

4. **CONCLUSION**

Sustainable development is one of the European Union's key policy objectives. The Commission believes that transport issues, and therefore mobility, are an integral part of such development.

Faced with the constant and worrying deterioration in transport and traffic conditions in the Brussels metropolitan region, the Commission, as one of the largest employers in Brussels, wishes to make an important contribution.

In anticipation of the new legislation in Brussels, the Commission has participated since 1997 in the Region's efforts to protect the environment, particularly through its decision on environmental issues in the administration of the Commission ('green housekeeping'). The various mobility facilities offered to staff since then are in response to this constant concern.

Through the mobility plan outlined in this Communication, the Commission intends to pursue its commitment, particularly as regards public transport, and to consolidate the measures taken by way of further diversification. The results of various surveys between 1998 and 2004 confirm the relevance of these measures and their beneficial impact.

The targets set by this plan are ambitious but achievable. Nevertheless, they depend to a large extent on the accompanying measures which the Brussels Capital Region must introduce and better public transport. It is vital, therefore, for cooperation with the Region and with transport providers to be improved.

The Commission wants this mobility policy to have a truly inter-institutional dimension, and to work at an agreed pace. The other European institutions in Brussels share these values, concerns and objectives.