

National Assembly for Wales
Europe Matters

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The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

Introduction

I am delighted to welcome you to the 21st issue of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

The European and External Affairs Committee was due to visit Brussels on 6th December to hold a range of meetings and discussions with EU Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski, the Welsh MEPs, the UK Ambassador to the EU, and the Cabinet of Regional Policy Commissioner Johannes Hahn.

The visit would have taken place in the midst of tense negotiations between the European Parliament, European Commission and the European Council over the 2011 EU budget. This would have given the Committee a unique opportunity to discuss the recently published EU Budget Review, Fifth Cohesion Report and Communication on the future of CAP, as well as exploring the potential implications of the various “EU flagship initiatives” that are part of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Disappointingly however, we were forced to cancel the visit at the 11th hour due to heavy snowfall and freezing conditions that enveloped the whole of Northern Europe in the run up to Christmas.

Nevertheless all of these important areas will be addressed by the Committee during the coming term, which represents the crucial last phase in discussions as the Commission prepares its final legislative proposals on these dossiers during the first half of 2011. We are delighted that Commissioner Lewandowski has confirmed that he will be available to participate in the Committee’s meeting on 01 February via video conference from Brussels.

The Committee’s second report on the future of Cohesion Policy was debated in plenary session here in Wales on 10 November 2010, the same day that the European Commission’s Fifth Cohesion Report was published. I was heartened by the strong level of cross-party support for our recommendations, a position reflected by all four Welsh MEPs. We understand from UK Government officials who attended our most recent meeting on 18 January that this view is shared by the UK Government as of now. They will support continuation of an EU-wide Cohesion Policy for all regions, including intensive support for poorer regions in rich Member States. BIS officials also invited Welsh stakeholders to contribute their views in the coming weeks on how plans to strengthen the urban dimension of the policy could impact on Wales. We are also pleased to see that the First Minister, Carwyn Jones AM, will be one of the speakers at the Fifth Cohesion Forum in Brussels on 31 January.

In September 2010, the European and External Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into Welsh participation in “non-Structural Funds programmes” supporting research, innovation and lifelong learning, the most well known of which is the Framework Research Programme. During October and November we held evidence sessions with the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills, Lesley Griffiths AM and the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales, Professor John Harries as well as the Brussels-based UK Research Office, plus three of the Welsh universities active in this area, Cardiff, Bangor and Aberystwyth.

We held our final evidence session on 18 January with the Technology Strategy Board and Professor Simon Bradley from EADS Innovation Works in Newport, focusing on private sector participation, and evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association. We aim to adopt and publish the report from this work in February. Due to the Welsh Assembly Elections in May, the Government response to the report will be carried over to the Fourth Assembly.

The Assembly's other Committees will also be completing their business in the run-up to dissolution at the end of March, and details of their activities can be found in this bulletin.

I would like to end by congratulating Councillor Bob Bright, the WLGA's full member of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) whose report on vocational education in Europe was adopted at the CoR plenary in December. Likewise, congratulations to Christine Chapman AM, who was recently appointed as CoR rapporteur for the Europe 2020 flagship initiative, 'a European Platform Against Poverty'. This is a particularly important issue in Wales and we will have a strong Welsh voice to present the views of Europe's regional and local authorities in this debate. Christine's report is scheduled for adoption at the CoR plenary on 31 March 2011.

Rhodri Morgan AM
Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee



EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

European and External Affairs Committee

- **EU Budget and the future of EU Cohesion Policy:** the Committee visit to Brussels scheduled for 06 December was postponed. Meetings had been arranged with the EU Budget Commissioner, Welsh MEPs, the Deputy Head Cabinet of Regional Policy Commissioner, Secretary General of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), and the Deputy Director General of Employment and Social Affairs. The evidence session with the EU Budget Commissioner will now take place via video conference on 01 February.
- **Welsh participation in EU Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning Programmes:** during November the Committee held evidence sessions with the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills, Lesley Griffiths AM and the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales, Professor John Harries, Aberystwyth University, Bangor University and the UK Research Office (UKRO). The Committee also took evidence from Technology Strategy Board, EADS Innovation Works and the Welsh Local Government Association at its meeting on 18 January, with the aim of agreeing its report in February.
- **First Minister for Wales:** the Committee received an update from the First Minister on 23 November, which covered all of the priority areas being followed by the Committee, in particular the EU Budget Review, future of Cohesion Policy and Europe 2020.

Sustainability Committee

- **Biodiversity:** the Committee took evidence from DG Environment at its meeting on 04 November as part of its inquiry into biodiversity. This session focused on the failure to deliver the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and discussed the European Commission's plans for the future of the policy to 2020. The Committee plans to publish its report in February 2011.
- **Carbon Reduction in Wales:** on 30 October the Committee published the final report from its three-year inquiry into Carbon reduction in Wales. The focus of the inquiry has been to look at how Wales is contributing to carbon reduction targets and to make recommendations to ensure Wales becomes a leader and exemplar of a low carbon, prosperous country. The report was debated in plenary on 26 January.

Rural Development Sub-Committee

- **Future of Common Agriculture Policy:** a debate was held in plenary on 03 November on the Sub-Committee's report and the Welsh Government's response.

External activities of Members on Assembly business

- On 26 October **Nick Bourne AM, David Melding AM** and **Nick Ramsey AM** were in Brussels for a series of meetings on economic and financial matters, as part of a programme organised through the office of Welsh MEP Dr Kay Swinburne. Meetings included Timothy Kirkhope MEP, leader of the UK Conservatives in Europe, BUSINESS EUROPE, and officials from DG Regional Policy, DG Economic and Financial Affairs and the UK Permanent Representation to the EU.
- On 21 – 23 November **Joyce Watson AM** and **Dai Lloyd AM** represented the National Assembly for Wales at the **41st British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary** conference held on the Isle of Man. During the conference an address was given to the participants by the President of the Nordic Council, Helgi Hjörvar from Iceland
- On 24 November **Christine Chapman AM** attended a meeting of the Economic and Social Affairs Commission of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- On 01 and 02 December **Christine Chapman AM** attended the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.

International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- On 10 November 2010 a **Russian delegation** on a three-day fact finding mission to the UK that involved a visit to Westminster and Holyrood, visited the National Assembly for Wales to discuss the Welsh experience of promoting and widening the use of minority languages.
- On 11 November officials from the **European Commission's DG Regional Policy and DG Employment** visited the Assembly to give members of the European and External Affairs Committee a private briefing on the Fifth Cohesion Report.
- On 12 November the **His Excellency Mr Pekka Huhtaniemi, Finnish Ambassador to the UK** visited Wales and met Rhodri Morgan AM as part of his programme.
- On 23 November the National Assembly's Pierhead hosted an **International delegation of Commonwealth Parliamentarians** from as near as Scotland and as far as Australia and New Zealand, as part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly UK's 5th International Parliamentary Governance Seminar.

Links

- [National Assembly for Wales homepage](#)
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For further information–

Contact:

Gregg Jones, Head of Office (Gregg.Jones@wales.gov.uk)
National Assembly for Wales EU Office
Wales House
6th Floor
Rond Point Schuman 11
1040 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: 0032 (0) 2226 6692
Mobile: 0044 (0) 7816 164 455

Or

National Assembly for Wales International Relations Team
External Communications
Ty Hywel (3rd floor)
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA
Tel: 0044 (0)29 2089 8642/8897
assembly.bookings@wales.gov.uk

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