



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Europe Matters

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Introduction

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

On 23 March we took evidence from European Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hübner to launch the European and External Affairs Committee's inquiry into the Future of EU Cohesion Policy, and further evidence sessions are planned for next term. Given Wales will benefit from around €2.2bn worth of European Structural Funds during 2007-2013 the debate over the future of this EU policy area is very important, not least in the context of the financial and economic crisis and concerns over growing unemployment across Europe. The Commissioner commended the Committee for the timeliness of this inquiry, and underlined that in her view there is a clear consensus about the need for continuing an EU-wide Cohesion Policy that involves all of Europe's regions, and which focuses on delivering the overarching goals of the Lisbon Strategy and sustainable development.

On 10 March we received an update from the First Minister on how the Welsh Assembly Government has been using Structural Funds and other instruments at its disposal to respond to the economic crisis, in parallel to the inquiry being carried out by the Enterprise and Learning Committee into this issue, which has taken evidence from a range of stakeholders in Wales.

Since our last update we have held two evidence sessions in the inquiry into Patients' Rights to Cross-Border Healthcare, with input from the NHS Wales Cymru, the NHS Confederation, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, BMA Cymru Wales, the British Dental Association, and the Welsh Assembly Government. This inquiry has thrown up a number of issues around the practicalities and challenges in engaging with cross-border flow of patients between Member States, and I look forward to the draft report and recommendations that will be presented for agreement in the Committee during May.

The National Assembly for Wales, through Christine Chapman, our member of the Committee of the Regions, will take a central role in the debate over the



Christine Chapman with President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso

future of the EU's Lisbon Strategy. Christine has been selected to write an own-initiative opinion on the future of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs, the key economic strategy guiding the European Union. Christine met Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso in Prague at the beginning of March, and we look forward to receiving an update from her on this work at our meeting on 28 April, where she will be joined by Councillor Bob Bright, from Newport City Council, the WLGA's representative on the Committee of the Regions, and Councillor Ronnie Hughes, from Conwy County Borough Council, the Welsh representative on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

I would also like to thank Andy Klom, the European Commission's representative in Wales for his regular contribution to the work of the Committee and for his update on 24 February, and we note the support the European Commission will put into the Europe Day event being held in the Senedd on 6 May.

Regarding the Assembly's other Committees, the Rural Development Sub-Committee held an evidence session on 26 March at the University of Lampeter on the implementation of the regulation on electronic identification of sheep, and the Sustainability Committee is due to start its inquiry into flooding in Wales at the end of April, and they will be visiting Gloucestershire to hear how they coped with the severe flooding in 2007, and also plan to take evidence from the European Commission as part of the Inquiry.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to note the variety and number of international delegations that have visited the Senedd over the last few weeks, including the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, delegations from Armenia, the Republic of Kosovo, Romania and Catalunya.

Sandy Mewies

Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee



Forthcoming EU business in the Assembly's Committees

European and External Affairs Committee

- **Inquiry into Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare:** the Committee plans to hold the evidence session with the Community Health Councils on 28 April (postponed from 23 March) and following this the report will be drafted for discussion by the Committee in May.
- **Inquiry into Future of EU Cohesion Policy:** a number of evidence sessions are planned for this inquiry during the Summer Term.
- **Committee of the Regions:** Christine Chapman and Councillor Bob Bright, the two full members from Wales on the Committee of the Regions will give an update to Committee on 28 April, and will be joined by Councillor Ronnie Hughes, the Welsh representative on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Sustainability Committee

- **Inquiry into Flooding in Wales:** the Committee will begin this inquiry in the new term, which will look at the effects of flooding on individuals and communities and responses to flooding incidents by key stakeholders including local authorities, the emergency services and insurance companies. The Committee will visit Gloucestershire on 11 May as part of this inquiry.

Rural Development Sub-Committee

- **Inquiry into the Production and Promotion of Welsh Food:** The Committee will continue to take evidence for this inquiry during the summer term.

Look Back: EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

European and External Affairs Committee

- **Inquiry into Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare:** on 24 February the Committee took evidence from NHS Wales, the Welsh NHS Confederation, the Welsh Assembly Government and the BMA Cymru Wales; on 10 March from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the British Dental Association Wales.
- **Economic and Financial Crisis:** on 10 March the First Minister gave a further update to the Committee on this issue.
- **Inquiry into Future of EU Cohesion Policy:** European Commissioner Danuta Hübner gave evidence to the Committee on 23 March.
- **European Commission Wales:** on 24 February Andy Klom, Head of the European Commission Office in Wales gave an update on EU activities across Wales.

Enterprise and Learning Committee

- **Inquiry on the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the international economic downturn:** the Committee took evidence from the Federation of Small Businesses and Venture Capital Wales on 26 February, from the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils in Wales on 5 March, from the Wales Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry Wales on 12 March, and from Swansea University, the University of Glamorgan and the West Wales Business Initiative on 19 March.

Sustainability Committee

- **Inquiry into Carbon Reduction by Industry and Public Bodies:** on 1 April the Committee launched its report on this inquiry.

Rural Development Sub-Committee

- **Inquiry into the Electronic Identification of Sheep (EID):** The Committee is undertaking a short inquiry into the electronic identification of sheep (EID), and heard the views of stakeholders on a range of issues associated with the implementation of EID at a meeting held on 26 March 2009 at Lampeter University, including local farmers, NFU Cymru, Farmers Union of Wales, and the Livestock Auctioneers Association.

External activities of Members on Assembly business

- **Committee of the Regions:** Christine Chapman attended the meeting of the Economic and Social Affairs Commission on 19 February, where she was formally nominated as the rapporteur on the own-initiative report on the Future of the EU Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. Christine also attended the summit of Cities and Regions in Prague on 5-6 March, where she met Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. On 29 April Christine will speak at a roundtable discussion in Brussels on the future of the Lisbon Strategy, and carry out a series of meetings with officials in Brussels on 20-21 April during the Committee of the Regions Plenary Session.

International visitors to the Senedd

- **Ambassador for the Slovak Republic:** on 16 March His Excellency Juraj Servan, the Ambassador for the Slovak Republic to the UK was given a tour of the Senedd, as part of a visit hosted by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- **Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo:** on 17 March a delegation from the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo led by the Speaker & President Mr Jakup Krasniqi, visited the Assembly for discussions with Assembly Members, as part of a broader visit looking at the Parliamentary process and government structure in the UK, and the role of devolved legislatures.
- **Armenian MPs visit:** on 10 March at the request of the British Council a delegation of Armenian MPs visited the Assembly for a series of meetings with Assembly Members and attended the European and External Affairs committee as observers. Assembly Members Christine Chapman, Sandy Mewies and Joyce Watson met the delegation later in the day and discussed matters relating to the work of elected Members and women in politics.
- **Catalan Employment Agency:** on 12 March a delegation from the Catalan Employment Agency were given a tour of the Senedd as part of a visit to Wales sponsored under the VETPRO mobility strand of the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme, which is aimed at sharing best practice in vocational training.
- **Romanian visit:** on 13 March at the request of the Rural Inspectorate for Wales a delegation of Romanians were given a tour of the Senedd and an overview of the National Assembly for Wales.
- **Europe Day:** on 6 May a Europe Day reception will be held at the Senedd including an exhibition and stands in the Oriel.

Links

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