

# Report to the National Assembly for Wales on the activities of the Welsh representatives on the EU Committee of the Region

January 2016

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



WLGA • CLILC



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.

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## Foreword

Published in March 2014, the report from the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee of the National Assembly for Wales inquiry into Wales' role in EU decision-making made the recommendation that the Assembly's members on the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the EU's Institution for Regional and Local Representatives, should periodically report back to the Assembly on their work on this EU body<sup>1</sup>.

At a crucial time for Wales in Europe, as a UK referendum on membership of the European Union approaches, the *four* Welsh CoR Members (from the National Assembly *and* from Welsh Local Government) speak with one, strong voice in Brussels on issues affecting Wales, and we commit to producing these reports to the Assembly jointly. This is the first report of its kind, but this process will continue during the fifth Assembly.

EU membership is critically important to Wales; access to the single market supports Welsh jobs, EU legislation in areas such as employment and environment has a positive impact on the quality of Welsh lives and ultimately, Wales is a net beneficiary of EU membership; we get more money *from* the EU than we contribute *towards* membership.

The Committee of the Regions allows for a Welsh voice on these issues. Whilst we recognise the limitations of the CoR as an institution, it is an important part of Wales' influence in Brussels, and as this report demonstrates- through close work with Wales' MEPs, Wales House partners, and other Brussels based organisations to be mentioned in the report, Wales' CoR Members are maximising the influence and benefit of our CoR work.

### Wales' CoR Members



**Mick Antoniw  
AM**



**Rhodri Glyn Thomas  
AM**



**Cllr Bob Bright  
(Newport)**



**Cllr Ronnie  
Hughes (Conwy)**

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<sup>1</sup> See Recommendation 9 of the report – available:  
<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=6722>

# Introduction

This report is timely, as 2016 will see changes to the Welsh CoR delegation, with both National Assembly for Wales members standing down as Members. Mick Antoniw AM ended his mandate in December 2015 and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM finishes at the end of March when the pre-election period commences. Joyce Watson AM has been nominated to replace Mick Antoniw and is likely to begin this role, together with Rhodri Glyn's successor, in the period after the election given the time taken to formally approve nominations.

The joint working by the Welsh delegation has proven invaluable and we are sure this will continue following the election.

The Assembly's EU Office and the WLGA's Brussels Office provide secretariat support to the Welsh delegation. These offices are co-located in Wales House alongside Welsh Government and Welsh Higher Education Brussels, who also support and engage in the work of the CoR.

This report sets out the work to date of the current Welsh CoR Members in Brussels and Wales in three main sections:

- 01. Section 1- Factual section** which explains the organisation and processes of the CoR.
- 02. Section 2- Our work in Brussels and in Wales**, which explains the activities undertaken by the Welsh CoR Members at EU level and at home in Wales.
- 03. Section 3-Recommendations** to the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government concerning Wales' current and future engagement with the EU.



Photo from Committee of the Regions (CoR)

# 01.Factual section

## 01.1. CoR mandates

The CoR operates on the basis of five-year mandates.



**Photo from CoR**

A new mandate began this year and will run until the end of January 2020.

The CoR is composed of 350 members (and 350 alternate members)- regional presidents, mayors and elected representatives of regions and cities- from the 28 EU Member States. National delegations reflect the overall political, geographical and local/regional balance of each Member State<sup>2</sup>.

Each Member State uses its own internal procedures for nominating members, in accordance with CoR rules of procedure<sup>3</sup>, and these national delegations are formally approved by the Council of the European Union ('Council'), which marks the beginning of the mandate of the member(s) concerned.

Rule 2 of the CoR rules of procedure sets out the basis of the mandate for CoR members, making it clear that the members, although having an electoral mandate and/or being politically accountable to an elected assembly, shall be 'completely independent' in their role as CoR members:

...They shall hold a regional or local authority electoral mandate or shall be politically accountable to an elected assembly. They may not be bound by any mandatory instructions and shall be completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the general interest of the Union.

Rule 3.2 of the CoR rules of procedure states when the mandate is considered to have ceased:

...The term of office of a member or alternate shall be terminated by resignation, the end of the electoral mandate on the basis of which he/she was appointed, or death.

Where this happens during a CoR 5-year mandate, a new member or alternate must be nominated by the Member State and subsequently approved by the Council, before they are officially appointed.

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/nationaldelegations/Pages/national-delegations.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/Pages/rules-of-procedure.aspx>

In the case of UK elections (devolved legislatures and local authorities), where roles as Assembly Members and Councillors cease during the pre-election period, the Council has clarified that if a CoR member (or alternate member) stands for re-election and is subsequently re-elected under the same mandate on which they were appointed to the CoR, then this is considered to be a renewal of mandate, and the member does not need to go through a re-appointment process.

Both Christine Chapman AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM went through this process during the 2011 Assembly elections. They ceased CoR activities from midnight on 31 March 2015 (when pre-election protocol came into effect) and recommenced their CoR duties once re-elected as Assembly Members, and following clarification of the question of renewal of mandate.

## **01.2. UK and Welsh delegations to the CoR**

The UK delegation to the CoR is comprised of 24 full members and 24 alternates. The secretariat for this is provided by the LGA (from London and Brussels)<sup>4</sup>.

Within the UK, the Prime Minister formally proposes a national delegation for the UK (for approval by Council, as described above).

The UK list is drawn up on the basis of nominations from the respective 'nations'. Within Wales the names are put forward by the First Minister, as is the case in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Within England the LGA is responsible for co-ordinating the nominations from the English local authorities as well as the London Assembly.

The processes by which the respective First Ministers of the Devolved Administrations select the nominees for the CoR mandate is determined by the respective Devolved Administrations/Legislatures.

Wales currently has four representatives of the UKs allocation: two full and two alternate members. Since the Assembly was established in 1999, these four places have been shared between the National Assembly for Wales and the WLGA. The National Assembly for Wales representatives are selected by the First Minister, whilst the WLGA has its own internal processes for selecting the representatives it proposes to the First Minister.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/nationaldelegations/Pages/delegation.aspx?country=United%20Kingdom>



The current Welsh representatives to the CoR are:

- Mick Antoniw AM from April 2013 to December 2015 was the Assembly’s full member – he took over from Christine Chapman AM in April 2013 (after she resigned in November 2012). He will be replaced by Joyce Watson AM
- Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM is the Assembly’s alternate member (since 2009). Rhodri Glyn will stand down from the CoR at the end of March 2016, as he will not be standing in the Assembly elections in May 2016
- Councillor Bob Bright, Leader of Newport City Council (full member since 2009)
- Councillor Ronnie Hughes, Deputy Leader of Conwy Council (alternate member), who replaced Councillor Chris Holley in January 2015 following a change of CoR mandate

### 01.3. Political groups

Whilst CoR members are appointed through national (Member State) delegations, and these are represented on the main decision-making bodies in the CoR (e.g. the political bureau), the day to day political work of the CoR is organised through the political groups.

There are currently five groups, with the Welsh members represented on two of these (the other groups are: the European People’s Party, the European Conservatives and Reform Group, and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe):

- The Progressive Alliance of European Socialists (PES): the largest group. Mick Antoniw, Bob Bright and Ronnie Hughes sit on this group
- The European Free Alliance (EFA): Rhodri Glyn Thomas sits on this group



### 01.4. Formal business of the Committee of the Region

The formal business of the Committee of the Regions is organised through thematic ‘Commissions’ (i.e. Committees), which meet around 4-5 times per annum (usually in the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, but occasionally these are external meetings held in other parts of the EU, hosted by one of the CoR members). Plenary sessions, attended by all 350 CoR members (or their alternates), are held six times per annum (usually in the European Parliament).

Mick Antoniw and Bob Bright as the full members are designated on two ‘Commissions’, although the standard practice within the UK delegation is for the full member to choose one Commission to sit on with the second Commission slots going to the two alternate members, Rhodri Glyn Thomas and Ronnie Hughes.

The Welsh members are on the following Commissions<sup>5</sup>:

- Mick Antoniw: SEDEC Commission<sup>6</sup> which includes social affairs, employment, education, training and culture (under the previous CoR mandate he was on the Economic and Social Policy Commission)
- Rhodri Glyn Thomas: ENVE Commission<sup>7</sup> which includes environment, energy and climate change (under the previous mandate he was on the Natural Resources Commission). Rhodri Glyn had also been a member in the previous mandate of the Temporary Ad Hoc Budget Commission
- Bob Bright: COTER Commission<sup>8</sup> which includes EU Structural Funds and EU Budget (under the previous mandate he was on the Education and Culture Commission)
- Ronnie Hughes: NAT Commission<sup>9</sup> which includes agriculture, rural development and fisheries

## 01.5. Rapporteurships

The formal business of the Committee of the Regions is led by 'rapporteurs' who are



**Photo from CoR**

responsible for preparing reports on dossiers being considered by the Committee. These reports are usually prepared in a two-stage process: (i) adoption at 'Commission' (ii) adoption at plenary.

Rapporteurships are secured through the political groups, on a points basis, with the largest groups having more points available to allocate to opinions. They represent something of a 'holy grail' for members, particularly for key policy and legislative dossiers, as the rapporteur acts as the figurehead and spokesperson for the Committee of the Regions with the other EU institutions, notably the European Commission and European Parliament.

This includes invitations to speak at conferences in Brussels and elsewhere in the EU, both during and after the adoption of the opinion.

It also provides the opportunity to meet senior politicians and officials, including Commissioners, Director-Generals, and other key figures in the European Commission, as well as MEPs.

Details on the rapporteurships of the Welsh delegation follow in the next section.

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/commissions/Pages/commissions.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/commissions/Pages/cor-commissions.aspx?comm=SEDEC>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/commissions/Pages/cor-commissions.aspx?comm=ENVE>

<sup>8</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/commissions/Pages/cor-commissions.aspx?comm=COTER>

<sup>9</sup> See <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/commissions/Pages/cor-commissions.aspx?comm=NAT>

## 01.6. Role of Wales House

In all of our work we are supported by the Assembly and WLGA's EU Offices in Wales House who have a close working relationship with the Welsh Government and Welsh Higher Education Brussels representatives as well. We are part of the wider family of Wales House and interact with the many visiting groups from Wales that come to Brussels, and use Wales House as their point of contact.

The Brussels-based officers provide continuity to our work, through their relationships and interactions with the CoR secretariat and political groups, the Welsh MEPs, European Commission and the wide range of representations and EU networks in Brussels. This is a pro-active role, including identifying opportunities for opinions, contributions to the formal business of the CoR, speaking slots at conferences and so on. It also includes providing 'expert' support to preparation of CoR reports. Welsh Government officials – twice in the case of Mick Antoniw AMs work – have also undertaken this 'expert' role on CoR opinions.



**Presiding Office Dame Rosemary Butler AM with Welsh MEPs Jill Evans, Dr Kay Swinburne and Derek Vaughan**

## 02. Our work in Brussels and in Wales

This section gives details on the range of activities that we undertake through our work on the CoR, at EU level (most of which takes place in Brussels) and at home in Wales.

### 02.1. Working on issues important to Wales

The Welsh members contribute through their work on the respective CoR Commissions (i.e. committees) and in plenary on topics of relevance to Wales. The choice of Commissions was planned to ensure areas of most relevance to Wales were covered, with the Welsh delegation agreeing to target different themed areas to ensure a broad range of issues could be covered.



This means that Councillor Bright leads on issues related to EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy, Mick Antoniw AM on social policy, employment and education, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM on environment and energy, Councillor Ronnie Hughes on rural development and CAP (areas previously covered by Rhodri Glyn).

Mick and Rhodri Glyn have spoken regularly during CoR plenary sessions on behalf of their political groups on a number of topics,

including EU funding and budget, the EU reform agenda, health and safety, CAP/rural affairs, employment and the refugee crisis, giving a Welsh perspective to these issues.

### 02.2. Rapporteurships: Strong track record

As already noted one of the most effective ways of exerting influence is through a rapporteurship. The Welsh delegation has a good track record in securing rapporteurships in important areas:

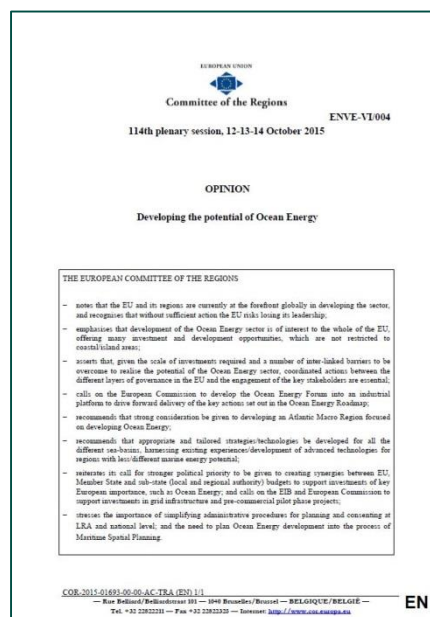
– Mick Antoniw AM:

- *Standards of Remuneration in Employment in the EU*: appointed March 2015; report adopted at plenary in December 2015)
- *Enhance Co-operation in Public Employment Services (PES) across Europe* (adopted in plenary in November 2013)



– Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM:

- *Developing the Potential of Ocean Energy*: appointed in March 2015; report adopted at plenary in October 2015
- *Creating effective synergies between EU, national and sub-national budgets* (adopted in plenary in January 2013)
- *Synergies in public and private finance in supporting local/regional investments including the role of the European Investment Bank* (in response to an invitation from the Irish Presidency of the EU) (adopted in plenary in April 2013)
- *Revision of the State Aid rules to Fisheries and Aquaculture* (adopted in plenary in November 2013)



– Councillor Bob Bright:

- Cyber Security Strategy (adopted in 2013)
- A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 Strategy (adopted in 2010)

*Note: as Councillor Ronnie Hughes recently started his first mandate he has not yet been appointed to a rapporteurship.*

## 02.3. Influence and evidence gathering in Brussels and Wales

In preparing these reports the Welsh members have undertaken evidence gathering sessions at the EU level (through meetings in Brussels/Luxembourg and other parts of EU, stakeholder consultations, desk based research) and at the Welsh level, including discussing with Welsh stakeholders, Assembly Committees and AMs, and the relevant Welsh Government Ministers.

The importance of this evidence gathering phase should not be understated, and in particular the timing in which the reports are prepared. Some examples below:

- Rhodri Glyn met the EU Budget Commissioner in the preparation of his budget synergies opinion in the weeks leading up to the key European Council meeting on the multi-annual financial framework 2014-2020.



**Photo from CoR. Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM with Lucinda Creighton TD, Irish Minister for Europe (2013)**

- Rhodri Glyn met EU Commissioner for Environment and Maritime Affairs at the Ocean Energy Europe conference in Dublin in October 2015, and his report was prepared during the critical stage in the preparation of the Ocean Energy Roadmap, led by DG Maritime Affairs (under Lowri Evans – who since September 2015 has taken over as Director General of DG Growth)
- Mick Antoniw met the lead rapporteur from the European Parliament for his report on Public Employment Services, who was preparing his report at the same time as Mick's was adopted, and was able to secure a number of amendments to the final report adopted by Parliament
- Rhodri Glyn was invited to attend the all Wales Monitoring Committee for the Structural Funds Programmes to present details on his work on the European Investment Bank and public/private partnerships in June 2013.



**Photo from CoR**

Rhodri Glyn has also appeared before four Assembly Committees:

- *Finance Committee (January 2012)*: to discuss his reports on synergies in EU, national and sub-national budgets, and synergies in public/private finance
- *Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee (September 2013)*: evidence to the inquiry into Wales' role in EU decision-making
- *Environment and Sustainability Committee (July 2014)*: as part of the evidence gathering for his report into State Aids to Fisheries and Aquaculture
- *Enterprise and Business Committee (September 2015)*: evidence to the Maritime Economy inquiry

## **02.4. Impact on EU policy and law-making**

There is clear evidence that the work has directly influenced European Parliament reports:

- Rhodri Glyn's report on synergies between EU, national and sub-national budgets called on the European Commission to include a chapter on 'local/regional' public finances each year (it had been included for the first time in 2012). This was picked up in two European Parliament resolutions adopted in 2013<sup>10</sup>.
- Mick's PES report work on PES led to four amendments to the European Parliament's report on this draft legislation, reflecting key points in the CoR position, including addition of references to sub-national employment services.

Similarly there is evidence of impact on European Commission work:

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<sup>10</sup> Mazzoni Report, adopted 8 October 2013: Resolution on effects of budgetary constraints for regional and local authorities regarding the EU's Structural Funds expenditure in the Member States (see paragraph 11). Pallone Report, adopted 16 January 2013: Resolution on Public Finances in EMU - 2011 and 2012 (see paragraph 12)

- In 2014 DG ECFIN published an economic paper<sup>11</sup> looking at the question of involvement of sub-national governments in annual budgetary processes, in line with one of the key recommendations in Rhodri Glyn's report on budgetary synergies.
- In September 2015 the EIB launched a new finance tool aimed at supporting higher risk projects in the renewable energy sector, including ocean energy, one of the issues that Rhodri Glyn discussed with the EIB in May 2015 during evidence gathering
- Also in September 2015 the European Commission published a new Strategy Energy Technology (SET) Plan, which included references to the need for stronger regional co-operation in the Atlantic for development of ocean energy – one of the central themes of Rhodri's report (around concept of an Atlantic Macro Region)

Through Mick Antoniwi's opinion on Standards in Remuneration his aim, backed by the PES Group, was to push the question of 'living wages' – a priority for Welsh Government – higher up the political agenda in Brussels and to stimulate a wider debate on this issue in the European Commission and European Parliament.

## **02.5. Impact of this work in Wales**

Welsh Government Ministers have on a number of occasions praised the work of Rhodri Glyn with the EIB, recognising the impact it has had on their approach to engagement with the EIB. Since Rhodri Glyn's report on the EIB and synergies in public/private finance Welsh Government Ministers have visited the EIB headquarters on a number of occasions, and in November the first event by the new EIB hub took place in Wales, supported by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government organised two conferences on youth employment, one in Wales in November 2014 and a follow up event in Brussels in June 2015. Mick worked closely with Derek Vaughan MEP and with the Welsh Government in the preparation of this conference, using contacts established with other EU countries through his PES report to identify best practice examples for these conferences.

Mick was originally due to speak at the November 2014 conference – however, due to Assembly business was not able to and Rhodri Glyn stepped in to do this, which was another example of the good working relationships between the Welsh CoR members.

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<sup>11</sup> Economic Papers 517 June 2014: Coordination arrangements across government sub-sectors in EU Member States, Georges Tournemire, DG ECFIN



**Members of Enterprise and Business Committee visiting the EIB headquarters in Luxembourg**

## **02.6. Welsh MEPs**

The Welsh delegation to the CoR has excellent working relationships with the Welsh MEPs. They meet regularly in Brussels and at EU events back in Wales, and the Welsh MEPs have been invited to contribute views in the preparation of draft CoR opinions. The Welsh MEPs have also been a helpful conduit to other MEPs in the European Parliament through the contacts in their political groups.

## **02.7. Use of Welsh in Brussels**

Rhodri Glyn presented all four of his reports in Welsh at the plenary sessions, making use of an agreement signed between the UK Government and the Committee of the Regions in November 2008 enabling Welsh to be used officially. The Welsh Government covers the costs of interpretation associated with this.

## **02.8. Ukrainian crisis**

Mick Antoniw has played a central in the political engagement of the CoR in the Ukrainian



**Photo by Matthieu Hornung**

crisis. He visited the Ukraine as part of a high level delegation from the CoR at the height of the protests in Kiev in January 2014, with further visits in 2014 and 2015. Also in 2015, as part of an initiative sponsored by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and in co-operation with the NUM and Coalfield Regeneration Trust, Mick delivered lectures to Eastern Ukrainian Universities and businesses showcasing examples from Wales of regeneration projects of former coalfields.



He is the official spokesperson on the Ukrainian crisis within the PES Group, speaking regularly at CoR plenary in debates on this crisis, including most recently (October 2015) in response to the EU High Representative, Mogherini. He was also appointed by the PES Group as one of their representatives on CORLEAP – the CoRs Eastern Partnership, which works with local and regional representatives from the Eastern bloc countries bordering the EU.

Mick met the Deputy Prime Minister of the Ukrainian Government in April 2014, conducting this meeting in Ukrainian, and also spoke at the subsequent debate in plenary.

## 02.9. Networking to influence and inform

Brussels is a networking city with a plethora of EU associations and representations covering a diverse range of interest. Through our work we get access to these bodies, including contacts through Wales House, our political groups and the CoR administration.

This includes networks such as Eurocities, CPMR, Ocean Energy Europe, the Social Platform, the ETUC and many other such organisations. This gives profile to our work, and provides an invaluable source of information and influence.

Because of their role as CoR Members, Cllr Bob Bright and Cllr Ronnie Hughes are also the WLGA's representatives for the CEMR, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (the pan-European LGA), holding a mandate within the CEMR's decision making bodies. Cllr Bob Bright in particular frequently attends CEMR meetings, in Brussels and other locations across the EU. Representing 150,000 local governments, from over 40 countries, CEMR meetings are a valuable platform for promoting the work of the Welsh CoR Members and maximising the impact of this work. The information and best practice shared by Elected Members from across the EU at these meetings in turn can also be very valuable to the work of the Welsh CoR Members.

## 02.10. 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CoR

In December 2013 the Welsh delegation submitted a response to a debate on the future of the CoR, launched by President Valcarcel (who has since become an MEP). The response, shared with the CLA Committee, highlighted areas where the Welsh delegation felt the CoR could improve its engagement, in particular highlighting the need for strengthened follow up on opinions adopted. There has been a change in priority under the new CoR mandate on this aspect of the CoRs work, which is very much welcomed by the Welsh delegation.

## 02.11. Speaking at conferences

The CoR members have spoken at numerous conferences in Brussels and other parts of the EU. Some examples:

- Rhodri Glyn was a chair and panellist (together with MEPs, senior officials from



**Welsh CoR members with former President of CoR Ramon Luis Valcárcel**

the European Investment Bank and the European Commission) during the Open Days Week of the Regions in 2013 and 2014. This is the major event for sub-Member State authorities and organisations held in Brussels each October.

- Rhodri Glyn spoke at a conference in Brussels on fiscal decentralisation and economic governance (24 June 2015)
- Mick Antoniw AM chaired a panel session at an EU conference on asbestos in Brussels (24 June 2015)
- Rhodri Glyn was a panellist at the Joint Research Council (JRC) COST research seminar on renewable energy in Brussels (24 November 2015). There were three other speakers from Wales at this event (Welsh Government and two academics).

The Welsh CoR members are also regularly asked to speak at EU conferences in Wales. For example: annual WLGA events on EU issues (e.g. 'Empowering communities in the 2014-2020 EU Programmes' in 2012, 'From Poverty to Prosperity: achieving change through EU funding 2014-2020' in 2013 and 'Rethinking public services across the EU, adapting to financial austerity' in 2014.



## 03.Recommendations

2016 (and potentially 2017) will be a significant year for Wales, with Assembly elections and the debate over the future of the UK and Wales in the EU.

We would very much welcome a resolution from the Assembly, both prior to the election and reaffirmed following the election, giving an unequivocal backing to the continued membership of the UK and Wales in the EU.

### 03.1. Recommendation 1:

**The National Assembly for Wales adopts a resolution before the end of the current Assembly and at the beginning of the fifth Assembly stating its support for continued UK (and Welsh) membership of the EU**

The Welsh CoR delegation welcomes the positive engagement it has with the National Assembly for Wales and its Committees. The annual invitation from the Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM, to participate in a meeting with the Chairs of Committees and the Welsh MEPs is particularly useful..

We look forward to this continuing under the fifth Assembly. Were it possible to organise such a meeting more regularly (e.g. twice a year or even once a term) this is something we would support.

One suggestion could be to organise an annual conference in the autumn, following the publication of the European Commission's Work Programme, where the Presiding Officer, Chairs of Committees, Welsh MEPs and CoR members, together with the relevant Welsh Government Ministers could discuss priorities for the forthcoming year as well as review/assess Welsh engagement in EU affairs over the previous year.

Such a conference could provide a useful hook with which to measure and focus EU engagement.

### 03.2. Recommendation 2:

**The National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government organise an annual EU conference to review engagement in the EU and to identify priorities for the following year. This event would bring together Welsh MEPs, Assembly Chairs, relevant Ministers, CoR representatives and Welsh stakeholders**

We agree with the reports from the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee and Enterprise and Business Committee which called on the Welsh Government to produce a revised EU strategy. The current strategy is outdated and has not provided sufficient strategic direction to Welsh engagement in EU affairs. A future strategy needs to be more focused, with clear objectives and targets, and adopted through a public consultation.

An important element of a future EU strategy must be communication. There is a lack of understanding and lack of information on how Wales engages with the EU. The EU referendum provides an opportunity to address this, building on the initiatives Jane Hutt AM, the Minister for Finance and Government Business, been promoting over the past two years.

### **03.3. Recommendation 3:**

**The Welsh Government publish a revised EU strategy in line with recommendations of the CLA Committee and Enterprise and Business Committee's reports adopted in 2014. This EU strategy should include a media/communications action plan aimed at strengthening the communication and coverage of how Wales engages in the EU.**

We underline the importance and value to Wales of having a strong and effective representation in Brussels. We agree with the Assembly's Committees (mentioned above) in the call for the representation in Wales House to be broadened to include business, further education and third sector interests. Wales House is most effective when it takes a proactive approach. A new EU strategy with clear priorities and focus should underpin this. Getting the Brussels operation and the Welsh 'home' organisations to work together effectively will strengthen the already strong contribution it makes in Brussels.

### **03.4. Recommendation 4:**

**The National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Government, the WLGA and Welsh Higher Education continue to support the role of Wales House in Brussels, including looking at how its representation can be broadened to effectively include business, further education and third sector interest.**

Effective participation in the CoR is constrained by the commitments members have back in Wales, and by the logistical challenges in getting to and from Brussels.

We welcome the understanding of political groups and of our own organisations in giving us time and space to attend meetings in Brussels. This requires flexibility, including use of twinning/pairing in the Assembly, an arrangement that has worked well between the parties. A resolution from the National Assembly for Wales formally recognising the importance of participation in CoR work and in ensuring members are given the space in which to do this would be a sign of this commitment.

### **03.5. Recommendation 5:**

**The National Assembly for Wales adopt a resolution recognising the importance of CoR members having the time to participate in CoR business in Brussels and at EU level, and the need for flexible working arrangements to continue to be agreed between the political parties to facilitate this.**



