

**National Assembly for Wales**  
EU Office

## Europe Matters

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



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## Introduction



**Dame Rosemary Butler AM**  
**Presiding Officer**

I am delighted to introduce the 34<sup>th</sup> issue of Europe Matters, our regular update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European affairs, and my final one before I stand down at the end of this Assembly.

It is an opportune moment, given the uncertainty around our future in the EU as we await the Referendum on 23 June, to reflect on what EU engagement has meant for this fourth Assembly. I think it is fair to say that mainstreaming of EU affairs across Committees has been a success, and has been widely welcomed both within the Assembly and by external stakeholders, despite initial reservations.

Whatever the outcome of the referendum in June I believe there will be a strong interest in the Assembly maintaining an active engagement with EU affairs, and I am sure that this will be reflected upon by the members of the new Assembly.

Even with Committees drawing to a close, European issues have remained high on the agenda. Enterprise and Business Committee held sessions with Welsh MEPs, Derek Vaughan and Dr Kay Swinburne, and with the three EU Funding Ambassadors, in recent weeks. This Committee also looked at the EU response to the ongoing crisis in the steel sector. Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee have written to Minister for Europe David Lidington MP with their observations on the UK Government's EU reform negotiations. Health and Social Care Committee held an update session with UK Government officials on draft EU proposals on New Psychoactive Substances. The Dutch Ambassador to the UK met the Deputy Presiding Officer and Committee Chairs to discuss the Dutch EU Presidency, with the UK referendum one of the prominent themes of discussions.

Mick Antoniw AM led a debate on a report by the Welsh CoR representatives to the Assembly on their recent work, whilst Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, who will stand down from the CoR in April, has attended a number of conferences and meetings in follow up to his report on Developing the Potential of Ocean Energy.

Finally, it has been a delight over the course of this Assembly to welcome so many distinguished guests and VIP visitors to the Senedd. Recent visits have included the French Ambassador to the UK, Her Excellency Sylvie Bermann who presented the Legion d'Honneur to Welsh veterans from World War II at special ceremony in the Pierhead, and a delegation from the Icelandic Parliament led by the Speaker Mr Einar K Gudfinnsson MP.

## EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

### Environment and Sustainability Committee

- A list of the Committee's EU priorities can be found on the European Affairs page of the Committee's website.
- In December 2015 the Committee considered the Commission's Work Programme for 2016 and published an **update on its EU work**. Consideration has been given to the Committee's EU priorities as part of its legacy work. The Committee's legacy report setting out its views on priorities for the next Assembly will be launched on 16 March 2016.
- **Organic production and labelling of organic products**: On 24 February the Committee noted a letter from the Deputy Minister for Farming and Food in which she promised to raise the Committee's concerns in negotiations.

### Enterprise and Business Committee

- **Maritime Economy**: On 12 February the Committee published the report from its inquiry into the Potential of the Maritime Economy in Wales.
- **Welsh MEPs**: On 24 February the Committee held a private update session with Welsh MEPs.
- **Steel Crisis**: On 3 March the Committee took evidence from producers, unions and the Welsh Government about the pressures facing the steel industry.
- **Connecting Europe/TEN-T follow up**: On 24 February the Committee noted a letter from the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport about engagement on possible bids under the Connecting Europe Facility.
- **EU Funding Ambassadors**: On 9 March the Committee met the Welsh Government's EU Funding Ambassadors for an update on their work.

### Health and Social Care Committee

- **Inquiry into new psychoactive substances**: On 11 February the Committee received a private factual briefing from UK Home Office officials on the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 and relevant developments at the EU level. The Committee hosted the launch of Gwent Police's NPS education tool on 24 February.

### Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

- **Report on Subsidiarity**: The monitoring report on subsidiarity issues relevant to Wales coming out of draft EU legislative proposals, covering the period September to February, was considered at the meeting on 7 March.
- **Inquiry on the UK Government's EU Reform agenda**: The Committee wrote to the Minister for Europe David Lidington MP in March detailing the findings from the inquiry it conducted into the UK Government's EU reform agenda.

## **Plenary business with dedicated sessions on European issues**

- 24 February: Mick Antoniw AM led a debate on the Report to the National Assembly for Wales on the Activities of the Welsh Representatives on the EU Committee of the Regions.

*Note: in addition to the above European issues feature in Ministerial Statements and in questions to Ministers on a regular basis.*

## **External activities of Members on Assembly business**

- 4 February: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, as Committee of the Regions rapporteur on Ocean Energy, attended an EU workshop on “The Role of City-Regions in the Achievement of a Low Carbon Economy”.
- 10-11 February: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- 12-17 February: Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM, undertook a visit to Africa. Her official programme included visits and meetings with Speakers and representatives of the Lesotho Parliament, South Africa’s Gauteng Provincial Legislature as well as at South Africa’s federal parliament. The visit also allowed the opportunity to meet with the Welsh community living and working in Lesotho and South Africa.
- 15-16 February: David Rees AM participated in a European Commission conference on High Intensive Industries and had meetings with UKREP and European Commission (DG Trade, DG Employment) to discuss the steel crisis.
- 19 February: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM participated in a roundtable on Ocean Energy at the European Commission
- 23 February: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM spoke at the Ocean Energy Forum in Edinburgh
- 24 February: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended the ENVE Commission meeting at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- 3 March: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended a conference on the future of EU Cohesion Policy at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels

## **International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd**

- 28 January: The French Ambassador to the UK, Her Excellency Sylvie Bermann visited the Assembly to present the Legion d'Honneur to twelve Welsh veterans from World War II at special ceremony in the Pierhead, hosted by the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM.
- 25 February: The Netherlands Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Simon J Smits visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM.
- 25 February – A delegation from Mongolia visited the Assembly as part of a wider programme to the UK organised by the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union.
- 1-2 March: French MP Monsieur Christophe Premat who represents the French people overseas in North Europe met Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a visit to the Assembly organised by Marie Brousseau-Navarro, The Honorary Consul of France in Cardiff.
- 2-3 March: A delegation from the Parliament of Iceland led by the Speaker Mr Einar K Gudfinnsson MP, visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM, David Hughes, Head of the EU Office in Wales as well as numerous Members and Commission officials as part of their official programme to Wales.

## Links

- [National Assembly for Wales homepage](#)
- [Assembly Business Notice](#)
- [Committee pages](#)
- [Research Service pages](#)

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### We welcome communication in either English or Welsh.

We hope you find this report of interest. If you do not wish to receive future editions of this newsletter, or if you have not received this directly and would like to add your name to the mailing list, please email Gregg Jones.

