



**National Assembly for Wales**  
EU Office

## Europe Matters

Issue 28: Autumn/Winter 2013-2014



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

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



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

I am delighted to introduce the 28<sup>th</sup> issue of Europe Matters, our update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

2014 is set to be an important year for Wales and the EU in a number of ways.

It marks the beginning of a new seven year financial framework for the EU, and Assembly Committees have been looking closely at the opportunities this means for organisations in Wales.

Enterprise and Business Committee has launched a new inquiry, following its work on EU Structural Funds and Horizon 2020. This focuses on programmes involving partnerships with other EU countries and regions, including Erasmus+, INTERREG, Creative Europe, COSME, and Connecting Europe. Following a fact-finding visit to Brussels they will hold evidence sessions in March.

Other work in the Assembly's Committees with an EU dimension includes inquiries into the Welsh Government's support to trade and inward investment, the work of Finance Wales, energy policy, marine environment and invasive alien species.

2014 also marks the beginning of five years of events and activities to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. I attended the launch of the Cymru'n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918 Programme at the Firing Line Museum of the Welsh Soldier in Cardiff on 28 October 2013. The National Assembly for Wales will be actively involved in this, with a programme of events planned over the coming years. We are also integrally involved in the work of the First World War Centenary Programme Board established by the First Minister and chaired by world-renowned historian Sir Deian Hopkin. The centenary is a very timely reminder of the importance of positive engagement with our European neighbours, and the close involvement of communities in France, Belgium and other parts of Europe will feature prominently.

2014 is a year of transition for the EU Institutions, with European Parliament elections in May, including the four MEPs representing Wales. It is very important that we have an open, informed and engaged debate, and I hope we will see a strong turnout in Wales, particularly given the increasingly important role the European Parliament has within the EU decision-making process. There will also be a new European Commission towards the end of 2014.

Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee will be watching these events with interest, following their inquiry into Wales' role in the EU decision-making. The report from this inquiry is expected to be published in the coming weeks.

2014 also marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Committee of the Regions, a body that I was a member of ten years ago. The Assembly continues to positively engage in its work, through our representatives Mick Antoniw AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM. In December David Melding AM was panellist at a high level conference on subsidiarity organised by the CoR in the Bundesrat in Berlin.

We have welcomed a number of distinguished guests and VIPs to the Assembly over the past few months, including: EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Laszlo Andor; the US, Irish, Argentinian, Bulgarian, Danish, Italian, Macedonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Swiss Ambassadors to the UK; and a parliamentary delegation from Canada.

Finally, I would like to pass on my condolences to the family of Anthony Packer, the Honorary Welsh Consul for Lithuania, who passed away last month. Anthony was presented with the Order of the Diplomatic Star, the highest distinction in the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service by the Lithuanian Ambassador to the UK, Her Excellency Mrs Asta Skaisgirytė Liauškienė, a fitting gesture in recognition of his work in Wales.

## EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

### Environment and Sustainability Committee

- **Inquiry into the Reform of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** This inquiry has been running since 2011. On 23 January the Committee held a session with the Minister for Natural Resources and Food to discuss his decisions with regard to the implementation of the CAP in Wales.
- **Marine policy and fisheries:** A follow up session to this inquiry was held on 6 February.
- **Energy Policy and Planning in Wales:** The committee published a follow-report on 17 October 2013, and the government responded on 22 January 2014. The plenary debate on the follow-up report was on 29 January.
- **Invasive Alien Species:** The Committee published its report in January 2014.
- **Sustainable Land Management Inquiry:** This inquiry, which is looking at the resilience and sustainability of land management practices and policies in Wales, was launched in the summer of 2013 with a public consultation. During the autumn and current term the Committee has held formal evidence sessions with a wide range of stakeholders, including a number of visits. A further external meeting is scheduled in February, and the Committee is due to report in spring.

### Enterprise and Business Committee

- **EU Structural Funds and Horizon 2020:** An update session is scheduled for 20 March with the Minister for Finance Jane Hutt AM to discuss the Welsh Government's preparations for the new EU Structural Funds programmes and Horizon 2020. This follows on from the inquiries undertaken by the Committee into these two areas during 2012 and 2013.
- **Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Regulations:** The Committee held an evidence session with officials from the European Commission's DG Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) on 21 November 2013. The Committee followed this up with a scrutiny session with the Welsh Government's Minister for Economy, Science and Transport Edwina Hart AM on 5 December and the UK Minister Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 16 January.
- **Inquiry into EU Funding 2014-2020:** this new inquiry focuses on the opportunities for Wales under a number of EU programmes, including Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Interreg and CEF/TEN-T. A written consultation was launched in December and closed on 31 January. Evidence sessions with a range of key stakeholders are scheduled to take place during the spring term, as well as a session with the Welsh Government's Minister for Finance on 20 March. The Committee visited Brussels on 13-14 February to gather background information for the inquiry.
- **Inquiry into the Welsh Government's approach to the promotion of trade and inward investment:** This new inquiry looks at the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's support structures to promote exports by Welsh businesses and facilitate

foreign direct investment, including cross-government working within the UK. It was launched in December with a written consultation, and evidence sessions are being held during the spring term including Welsh Government Ministers, academics and other stakeholders. The inquiry is considering how the current 'inhouse' support provided through by the Welsh Government compares with the previous arms-length approach through the Welsh Development Agency and Wales Trade International.

- **Youth Entrepreneurship:** the report from this inquiry was published on 14 November and the response by the Welsh Government was laid on 15 January. The report was debated and noted in plenary on 22 January.

### **Children and Young People Committee**

- **EU Update session:** following publication of the European Commission's 2014 Work Programme an EU update session was held on 4 December to discuss priorities for EU-related work in the Committee during 2014
- **Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households:** The committee held evidence sessions and a visit in November 2013, and a further evidence session on 6 February. One aspect the Committee is looking at is the scope to compare performance in Wales with other European countries.

### **Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee**

- **EU Update session:** following publication of the European Commission's 2014 Work Programme an EU update session was held on 4 December to discuss priorities for EU-related work in the Committee during 2014

### **Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee**

- **Inquiry into Wales' role in the EU decision-making process:** the Committee held further evidence sessions during the autumn, including the First Minister Carwyn Jones AM, Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary Fiona Hyslop MSP, UK Government Minister for Europe Rt Hon David Lidington MP, former Director-General of DG Employment Hywel Ceri Jones, and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM in his capacity as Committee of the Regions member. A 'rapporteur group' from the Committee also visited Brussels in October for meetings with MEPs, European Commission and other Brussels based representatives. The Committee is due to report in February.
- **Report on Subsidiarity:** regular termly report on monitoring of subsidiarity dimension of EU legislative proposals. The most recent, covering the period May – August 2013 was considered at the Committee's meeting on 30 September 2013. No subsidiarity concerns were raised during this period. The Committee will consider a report for the period September-December 2013 during this Spring term.

### **Finance Committee**

- **Enterprise Zones inquiry:** The Committee published its report in December 2013.
- **Finance Wales:** the Committee is undertaking an inquiry into Finance Wales, including looking at its role in delivering the JEREMIE micro-finance scheme, supported with ERDF and EIB finance, under the 2007-2013 Structural Funds programmes in Wales. The first evidence session took place on 5 February.

- **Higher Education Funding:** this inquiry was launched in the summer of 2013, including a written consultation and evidence sessions during the autumn. Further evidence has been taken from Welsh Higher Education including its use of and participation in various EU funding programmes. Further discussions will take place in February.

### **Health and Social Care Committee**

- **Access to medical technologies in Wales:** The committee held the first evidence session on 22 January and further sessions are planned for the Spring term. As part of the inquiry the Committee will consider best practices in other EU countries concerning the introduction of new technologies into health care systems.

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

- 26 November: Debate on the Marine and Fisheries Strategic Action Plan, following a Statement by the Minister for Natural Resources and Food
- 26 November: Debate on the benefits to Wales of the UK's continued membership of the European Union
- 14 January: Debate on the Implementation of a new Common Agricultural Policy, following a Statement by the Minister for Natural Resources and Food
- 14 January: Urgent question about potential for EU Solidarity Fund application from the UK to support actions to address
- 22 January: Debate on the Enterprise and Business Committee's report on Youth Entrepreneurship

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

## External activities of Members on Assembly business

- 28 August - 5 September Branch Chair Joyce Watson AM, Simon Thomas AM and Ann Jones AM represented the CPA Wales Branch at the 59<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- 4 September the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM attended a CALRE meeting in Brussels
- 1 October Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM presented his draft report on State Aids Fisheries and Aquaculture at the meeting of the Natural Resources Commission at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- 2 October Mick Antoniw AM presented his draft report on European Public Employment Services at the meeting of the Economic and Social Affairs Commission at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- 8-10 October: Mick Antoniw AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended the Committee of the Regions plenary during the Open Days Week of Cities and Regions in Brussels. Rhodri Glyn Thomas chaired a panel session with the European Investment Bank (EIB), and was a panellist at a seminar organised by the European Association of Public Banks, both seminars focusing on the role of public and private finance in the EU, including the role of EIB.
- 20-22 October the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM, William Powell AM, Joyce Watson AM, Lindsay Whittle AM and Darren Millar AM attended the 47th British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary held in London. The theme of the conference was “The Good Friday Agreement 15 Years on”.
- 28-29 November: Mick Antoniw AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will present their reports for adoption at the Committee of the Regions plenary in Brussels. Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will present his report in Welsh.
- 18 December: Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM will speak at the Committee of the Regions’ 6th Subsidiarity Conference which takes place in the German Parliament (Bundesrat) in Berlin.
- 13 January Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM represented the Assembly at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, Environment and Social Committee meeting on their current inquiry into ‘Roma Travellers’ held in Dublin.
- 13 January William Powell AM represented the Assembly at the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, European Committee meeting on their current inquiry into the role of the ‘European Investment Bank’ held in Luxembourg.
- 20 January David Rees AM, Eluned Parrott AM, Antoinette Sandbach AM and Simon Thomas AM visited CERN in Geneva, Switzerland, for fact-finding visit, linking in with researchers from Wales working on the Hadron Collider and other particle accelerators/detectors.



- 20-22 January Mick Antoniw AM was part of a high level delegation from the Committee of the Regions to the Ukraine.
- 23 January Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM was a speaker, in his capacity as rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions, at a conference organised under the TAIEX Programme in Brussels
- 30-31 January Mick Antoniw AM attended the plenary of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels
- 6 February Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended the NAT Commission meeting at the Committee of the Regions
- 7 February Andrew RT Davies AM visited Brussels for a series of meetings with DG Agriculture and other Brussels-based representatives on the recently agreed CAP reforms and the proposed implementation of these in Wales.
- 10 February Mick Antoniw AM attended meetings at the Committee of the Regions
- 12-13 February Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended meetings at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels
- 13-14 February members of the Enterprise and Business Committee visited Brussels for a series of meetings with European Commission officials and other Brussels-based representations as background to its new inquiry into EU Funding 2014-2020

## International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- 12 September the Latvian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Andris Teikmanis visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 1 October the Lithuanian Ambassador, Her Excellency Mrs Asta Skaisgirytė Liauškienė visited the Assembly to give evidence to the Chair's Committee on Lithuania's priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during her visit to Wales.
- 8 October the Bulgarian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Konstantin Dimitrov visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 10 October the Macedonian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Jovan Donev visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 25 October the Swiss Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Dominik Furgler visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 6 November the United States of America Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Matthew Barzun visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 5 December the Argentine Ambassador, Her Excellency Ms Alicia Castro visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM as part of a series of meetings during her visit to Wales.
- 6 December the Danish Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Claus Grube visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 19-22 January the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM welcomed a Canadian Parliamentary delegation to the Assembly on an official visit to share best practices on citizen engagement and working bilingually.
- 31 January the Italian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Pasquale Q Terracciano visited the Assembly and met the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 5 February the Irish Ambassador, His Excellency Dr Daniel Mulhall visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM as part of a series of meetings during her visit to Wales.
- 11 February the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM met EU Commissioner for EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Laszlo Andor, during his visit to Wales organised by the Welsh Government.

### **Links**

- **National Assembly for Wales homepage**
- **Assembly Business Statements and Announcements**
- **Committee pages**
- **Research Service**

### **For further information:**

#### **Contact:**

Gregg Jones, Head of Office (**[Gregg.Jones@wales.gov.uk](mailto: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  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1NA  
Tel: 0044 (0)29 2089 8642/8897  
**[InternationalTeam@Wales.gov.uk](mailto:InternationalTeam@Wales.gov.uk)**

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.