

**National Assembly for Wales**  
EU Office

## Europe Matters

Issue 30 – Summer/Autumn 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 30th issue of Europe Matters, our update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

It was a privilege and an honour to participate on 16 August at the inauguration of the Welsh Memorial in Langemark, Flanders, to the Welsh soldiers who lost their lives in Flanders Fields during the First World War. Over 1,000 people from Wales and Flanders attended the ceremony, including the three leaders of the opposition parties in the Assembly, Andrew RT Davies AM, Leanne Wood AM and Kirsty Williams AM, and of course the First Minister Carwyn Jones AM.

I and my fellow Commissioners, Sandy Mewies AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, will attend a special commemoration in Flanders next month, at the invite of the President of the Flemish Parliament Jan Peumans. This is another example of the strong co-operation and warmth between our two nations.

Since the European Parliament elections in May the Brussels agenda has been dominated by high level negotiations on institutional questions and posts. Assuming things run smoothly in the European Parliament hearings next month, the new European Commission is expected to take office under President-elect Jean-Claude Juncker in November. The low representation of female Commissioners, likely to be less than one third of the total, is very disappointing. In 2012 I launched the Women in Public Life campaign in Wales aimed at lowering the barriers women face in public life, and I have written to President-elect Juncker offering to share this work with the European Commission.

It is important that our Committees, political groups and individual AMs actively engage with the new European Parliament and Commission. The Shadow Cabinet of Plaid Cymru visited Brussels earlier this month, as did my deputy David Melding AM to meet the Welsh MEPs. The visit of members of the Children and Young People Committee to the OECD in Paris to discuss the PISA survey and other issues important to Wales is another example of positive interaction by the Assembly.

Whilst NATO has dominated the headlines over recent weeks we have welcomed a number of other important VIP guests to the Assembly.

# EU related topics in the Assembly's Committees

## Environment and Sustainability Committee

- **Sustainable Land Management Inquiry:** This inquiry looked at the resilience and sustainability of land management practices and policies in Wales. After a public consultation in summer 2013 evidence sessions were held in the Senedd and elsewhere. The Committee reported on 19 May and there was a plenary debate on the report on 9 July.
- **Inquiry into the organic production and labelling of organic products:** This is an inquiry on the potential impacts on Wales of the European Commission's proposals for a Regulation on organic production and the labelling of organic products and the proposals made in the Action Plan on the future of organic production in the EU. The inquiry will: Consider the potential impacts of the proposals on the organics sector in Wales; Consider recommendations for changes to the legal proposals published; Act as a forum for stakeholders in Wales to engage with the debate on the future of organic production in the EU. The Committee has asked for evidence from both individuals and organisations ahead of an oral evidence session on 13 November.
- **Marine policy and fisheries:** The Committee has continued to keep development of the Welsh Government's marine and fisheries policy under review including delivery of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in Wales. Further follow-up sessions will be held in early 2015.
- **Cultivation of GMO's:** Following on from the Council of Minister's agreement on a negotiation position on proposals to amend the authorisation process for the cultivation of GMO's, the Committee held factual briefing sessions with Welsh Government and European Commission officials on the content of the proposed amendments.
- **Ban on driftnets:** Following the publication by the European Commission of a regulation to prohibit the ban on driftnets the Environment and Sustainability Committee wrote to the Welsh Government to clarify its response to the proposals. The Committee will continue to keep a watching brief over this proposal alongside the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee of the Assembly.

## Enterprise and Business Committee

- **Inquiry into EU Funding Opportunities 2014-2020:** this inquiry focussed on the opportunities for Wales under a number of EU programmes, including Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Interreg and CEF/TEN-T. The report was published (and launched at Chapter Arts Centre) in July 2014 and the Welsh Government response debated on 17 September
- **Inquiry into the Welsh Government's approach to the promotion of trade and inward investment:** This 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. The inquiry is considering how the current 'inhouse' support provided by the Welsh Government compares with the previous approach through the Welsh Development Agency and Wales Trade International. The report is expected to be published in the autumn term.

## Children, Young People and Education Committee

- **Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households:** The Committee has held evidence sessions and a visit in November 2013 and in spring this year. The inquiry is expected to finish and a report published by the end of 2014.
- **OECD visit.** The committee chair, Ann Jones AM, and some committee members visited the OECD in Paris in September to discuss the PISA results and other matters.

## Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

- **Inquiry into Wales' role in the EU decision-making process:** The Committee's report was published on 6 March, and the Welsh Government's response was debated in plenary on 4 June.
- **Report on Subsidiarity:** The monitoring report on relevant subsidiarity issues to Wales coming out of draft EU legislative proposals covering the period August 2013-April 2014 was noted by the Committee at its meeting on 19 May. The next monitoring report, for the period May to September 2014, will be considered during the autumn term.
- **EC-UK Forum:** The Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee and Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM attended the most recent meeting of the Chairs of the EU (or equivalent) Committees in the UK and Devolved Legislatures, which was held on 9 June in the House of Commons.

## Finance Committee

- **Finance Wales:** this inquiry looked at Finance Wales' role in delivering the JEREMIE micro-finance scheme, supported with ERDF and EIB finance, under the 2007-2013 Structural Funds programmes in Wales. The report was published in May 2014.
- **Higher Education Funding:** this inquiry was launched in the summer of 2013, including a written consultation and evidence sessions during the autumn and spring. Further evidence has been taken from Welsh Higher Education including its use of and participation in various EU funding programmes. The report was published in May 2014. In July 2014 the Public Accounts Committee discussed the report on Higher Education Finances and agreed a number of follow up actions.

## Health and Social Care Committee

- **Access to medical technologies in Wales:** The Committee held evidence sessions in the spring term and will continue its work in the autumn 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**

- 4 June The Assembly noted the Report from Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee's Inquiry into Wales' Role in the EU Decision-making Process
- 17 June The Minister for Natural Resources and Food gave a statement on the Future of Glastir under the Rural Development Plan, followed by a debate.
- 8 July The Minister for Economy, Science and Transport made a statement on the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, followed by a debate.
- 17 September The Assembly noted the Report from Enterprise and Business Committee's inquiry into EU Funding Opportunities 2014-2020

*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

- 9 June Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM participated in the EC-UK Forum meeting of Chairs of the UK and Devolved Parliaments European Committees, which was hosted by the House of Commons
- 12-14 June Assembly Commissioner Peter Black AM attended the CALRE Working Group meeting on e-Democracy which was held at the Parliament of Andalucía in Seville, where he delivered a presentation on the Assembly as an exemplar in e-democracy.
- 20 June Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM attended the CALRE Standing Committee meeting at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels
- 24 June Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM was a panellist at a conference on EU economic governance and fiscal decentralisation organised by the Committee of the Regions
- 25-26 June Mick Antoniw AM attended the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions in the European Parliament in Brussels
- 2 July Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM Chaired a panel discussion at a conference on the role of regional Parliaments in the EU at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels
- 3-4 July Mick Antoniw AM participated was part of a high level political delegation from the Committee of the Regions visiting Kiev in the Ukraine
- 15-17 August Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM, the leader of the Opposition and Welsh Conservatives Andrew RT Davies AM, the leader of Plaid Cymru Leanne Wood AM, and the leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats Kirsty Williams AM visited Pilckem Ridge in Langemark, Flanders to attend the service of dedication of the New Welsh Memorial to the men who died in the First World War. The First Minister Carwyn Jones AM and the Minister-President of the Flemish Government Geert Bouregeois officially opened the new memorial.
- 1-3 September the Shadow Cabinet of Plaid Cymru (Leanne Wood AM, Elin Jones AM, Llyr Gruffydd AM, Rhun ap Iorwerth AM, and Simon Thomas AM) visited Brussels for a series of meetings in the European Parliament and Wales House.
- 4 September Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM gave a keynote address on the “*Constitutional Futures for the British Isles?*” as an invited speaker at a “Collaborative Scotland” event held in Edinburgh.
- 9-10 September Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM visited Brussels for meetings with the Welsh MEPs, EU officials, and other Brussels-based representatives.
- 17-20 September Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM led a delegation of the Assembly’s *Women in Democracy Caucus* on a study visit to Reykjavik, to learn more of the Icelandic Parliament’s positive experience and record of gender equality.
- 19 September Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will attend the meeting of the Committee of the Region’s Natural Resources Commission in Florence.
- 28-29 September Mick Antoniw AM will participate in a CORLEAP (Eastern Partnership) meeting organised by the Committee of the Regions in Tbilisi, Georgia.

- 3 October Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will be in Brussels for a meeting of the Natural Resources Commission in the Committee of the Regions
- 7-8 October Mick Antoniw AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM are likely to attend the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- 9 October Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will Chair a panel session (including speakers from the European Investment Bank) on Financial Instruments in the EU 2014-2020, at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels during the Open Days 2014 Week of Cities and Regions.
- 16-17 October the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Sandy Mewies AM and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM will participate in a commemoration of the First World War in West Flanders organised by the Flemish Parliament.
- 19-21 October Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM will lead a delegation of Assembly Members to the 49<sup>th</sup> British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary to be held in Ashford, Kent and in Ypres Salient, Flanders to commemorate the anniversary of the First World War.
- 27-31 October Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM will lead a delegation of Assembly Commissioners on the Assembly's first outward visit to Canada. The visit will include official visits to both the Federal Parliament in Ottawa as well as the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick in Fredericton.



## International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- 20 June Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM met the Jamaican High Commissioner, Her Excellency Aloun Ndombet as part of a series of meetings during her visit to Wales.
- 26 June Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM met the German Ambassador, His Excellency Dr Peter Ammon.
- 30 June The British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly's (BIPA) Economic Affairs Committee held a meeting at the Senedd as part of its inquiry into 'Youth Unemployment' and heard evidence from Deputy Minister Ken Skates AM.
- 7 August Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM met with Martín Buzzi, Governor of the Province of Chubut (Argentina) who was visiting Wales as part of a series of meetings in advance of next year's 150th anniversary of the Welsh settlers in Patagonia.
- 16 October The Italian Ambassador, His Excellency Pasquale Q Terracciano will visit the Assembly to give evidence to the Assembly's Committee Chairs on Italy's priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

## Links

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- [Committee pages](#)
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## For further information

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