

National Assembly for Wales
EU Office

Europe Matters

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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 29th issue of Europe Matters, our update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales on European issues.

It is fitting that we publish this issue on Europe Day, given the forthcoming European Parliament elections, which will be held later this month. In total 751 MEPs will be elected across the 28 Member States, including the four MEPs to represent Wales. I know I speak on behalf of all Assembly members in hoping to see a good turnout in these elections.

The status of the European Parliament and its formal powers have been enhanced by the Treaty of Lisbon. Its role as co-legislator on most areas of EU policy, including devolved competences such as agriculture and environment, make its work even more relevant to the Assembly.

We have placed a strong priority in building a 'legislature to legislature' dialogue with the European Parliament, through the work of our Committees; helping raise awareness and understanding in Wales of some of the key strategic dossiers, and looking to facilitate a positive contribution from Wales to the law-making process in Brussels.

The Welsh MEPs are a very important part of this relationship and I look forward to welcoming them to the Assembly following the elections, to discuss how we can continue this good work, to most effectively promote Welsh interests and deepen our links with the European Parliament.

One of the points of discussion will no doubt be the report by the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, published on 6 March, from its inquiry into Wales' role in the EU decision-making process. This will be debated in plenary on 4 June.

Enterprise and Business Committee will report on its EU Funding Opportunities 2014-2020 and Trade and Investment inquiries, whilst Environment and Sustainability Committee also had a number of EU-related sessions on agriculture, environmental and marine issues, including in March a session with Gwilym Jones, Member of the EU Agriculture Commissioner's Cabinet. You can find more details on the EU work of all Assembly Committees in the pages that follow.

On 15 May we will welcome the Greek Ambassador to the UK, His Excellency Mr Konstantinos Bikas, for a meeting of Committee Chairs to discuss the Greek Presidency of the EU. Later that evening it will be my pleasure to co-host a reception in the Senedd with the Greek Ambassador and the European Commission's Wales Office to mark Europe Day.

We have welcomed a number of other distinguished and VIP guests over the past weeks and months, including the Polish and Belarussian Ambassadors to the UK, the Irish Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and the President of the Senate of Grenada.

This will continue on 27-29 May when the Assembly's Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) will host, for the first time since 2002, the British Isles and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Conference in the Senedd. The theme of the Conference will be "**Equality of Access to Democracy**" and will include sessions on Enhancing the Participation of Women in Public Life and Democracy; Bilingualism and the Role of Official languages in Parliament and Engagement of Young Citizens in the Democratic Process.

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. Negotiations on the legislative proposals for the CAP are completed and the task and finish group was dissolved in December 2013. The Committee held an update session with Gwilym Jones, Member of EU Agriculture Commissioner Cioloş' cabinet on 13 March.
- **Marine policy and fisheries:** On 6 February the committee took evidence from stakeholders in a follow-up session to the inquiry. Also in February the Welsh Government published its report to the Assembly on Marine Protected Areas in Wales.
- **Invasive Alien Species:** The Committee published its report in January 2014, and it held a plenary debate on 2 April 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. Evidence sessions were held in the Senedd and elsewhere in autumn and January, and a further evidence session was held in Aberystwyth on 20 February. The committee is due to report in late May 2014.

Enterprise and Business Committee

- **EU Structural Funds:** an update session was held on 20 March with the Minister for Finance, Jane Hutt AM on the Welsh Government's preparations for the new EU Structural Funds programmes.
- **Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Regulations:** This features as one of the funding streams covered in the Committee's EU Funding Opportunities 2014-2020, with follow up to the issues coming out of evidence sessions with the European Commission (21 November 2013), Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Science and Transport (5 December 2013), and UK Under-Secretary of State for Transport (16 January 2014)
- **Inquiry into EU Funding Opportunities 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. This has included extensive evidence gathering through a written consultation, a Committee visit to Brussels in February, an outreach event at Cardiff Metropolitan University with students and staff, and formal evidence sessions in the Assembly. The formal evidence sessions, held in March and early April, included: Professor Colin Riordan President and Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University, and Chair of the UK International Unit which is co-ordinating the new UK Strategy for Outward Mobility; Fiction Factory, Chapter Arts Centre, Welsh ports, Welsh universities and further education, third sector, the British Council and Welsh Government. The Committee is expecting to report during the summer term.

- **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. It was launched in December with a written consultation, and evidence sessions were held during the spring term including Welsh Government Ministers, academics and other stakeholders. The inquiry is considering how the current 'inhouse' support provided by the Welsh Government compares with the previous arm's-length approach through the Welsh Development Agency and Wales Trade International.

Children, Young People and Education Committee

- **Inquiry into Educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households:** The committee held evidence sessions and a visit in November 2013, and further evidence sessions in February and March. One aspect the Committee is looking at is the scope to compare performance in Wales with other European countries.

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 is currently scheduled to be debated in plenary on 4 June. The inquiry was launched in May 2013, and included two Committee visits to Brussels in 2013 to gather evidence, as well as formal evidence sessions during the summer and autumn of 2013.
- **Report on Subsidiarity:** The next report on monitoring of the subsidiarity dimension of EU legislative proposals will cover the period from September 2013 to April 2014, and will be considered in the summer term.
- **EC-UK Forum:** The Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee and Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM represents the Assembly at the regular meeting of Chairs of the committees responsible for EU affairs within UK and devolved legislatures. It is a forum to exchange information on the EU work of the different legislatures. The next meeting is scheduled for 9 June and will be hosted by the House of Commons.

Finance Committee

- **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. Evidence sessions took place in February and March.
- **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 is expected to be published in the summer term.

Health and Social Care Committee

- **Access to medical technologies in Wales:** The committee held evidence sessions in 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 March: Debate on the positive contribution of the EU to Wales and Wales to the EU
- 30 April: Debate on EU and use of EU Structural Funds in Wales

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

- 7-8 March Mick Antoniw AM attended the 6th European Summit of Regions and Cities organised by the Committee of the Regions in Athens.
- 30 March – 1 April the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM, William Powell AM, Joyce Watson AM, Lindsay Whittle AM and Darren Millar AM attended the 48th British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary held in Dublin. The theme of the conference was “Youth Unemployment”.
- 2-3 April Mick Antoniw AM attended the Committee of the Regions plenary session in Brussels, and had a bilateral meeting with the Vice-Prime Minister of the Ukraine, Mr Volodymyr Groysman.
- 7 April Mick Antoniw AM attended the CIVEX Commission meeting in Brussels.
- 8 April Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM attended the Natural Resources Commission in the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.
- 28 April Mick Antoniw AM was a speaker at an EU conference organised by CORLEAP at the Committee of the Regions.
- 24 June Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM invited as speaker at the Committee of the Regions, OECD and European Commission sponsored High Level Conference in Brussels on subnational finances.

International and other VIPs visiting the Senedd

- 5 March the Belarus Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Sergei Aleinik 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 March the Polish Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Witold Sobków visited the Assembly and met the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 13 March Gwilym Jones, Member of EU Agriculture Commissioners' Cabinet, attended the meeting of Environment and Sustainability Committee.
- 17 March a delegation from the Provincial Assembly of Punjab visited the Assembly as part of a wider programme arranged by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
- 20 March the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM met with Dr Lawrence Joseph President of the Senate of Grenada during his visit to Wales organised by Cardiff University Law School.
- 7 April the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM met with Mr Dinny McGinley TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs during a visit to Wales.
- 8 May the Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM met with His Excellency Mr Ranjan Mathai the Indian High Commissioner as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 14 May the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM will meet with the Mexican Ambassador His Excellency Mr Diego Gómez-Pickering as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 15 May the Greek Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Konstantinos Bikas will visit the Assembly to give evidence to the Assembly's Committee Chairs on Greece's priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
- 20 May the Presiding Officer Dame Rosemary Butler AM will meet the Speaker of the Senate of Canada, the Hon. Noël A. Kinsella as part of a series of meetings during his visit to Wales.
- 27 to 30 May the National Assembly for Wales' Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) looks forward to hosting the British Isles and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Conference in the Senedd and Assembly estate between 27-29 May 2014. This will be the first time for the CPA Wales Branch to host this prestigious conference since 2002.

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.