

## **COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

<b>Date</b>	30 November 2000
<b>Time</b>	2.00pm
<b>Venue</b>	Committee room 1, The National Assembly Building

### **Title Update on the European Strategy Group's Report**

#### **Purpose**

To provide an update on progress made in implementing the European Strategy Group's recommendations.

#### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to endorse the content of the report and recommend further action as necessary.

#### **Background**

The then Secretary of State for Wales set up the European Strategy Group in June 1998, and a list of members is attached at Annex 3A. The Group published a report which made a series of recommendations in December 1998; a copy is available in the library.

At its first meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999 this Committee received a report summarising the recommendations and setting out the action which had been taken to implement them. Since then the Assembly has had a further year and a half to develop its relations with the European Union, and this report provides an update on progress against the recommendations made by the European Strategy Group. A table outlining progress to date, and progress at the last reporting stage, is attached at Annex 3B, and a summary of relevant actions by Subject Committees is attached at Annex 3C.

#### **Activities since the establishment of the Assembly**

The following activities have been carried out by the European Affairs Division in conjunction with other Divisions over the past eighteen months:

1. **Assembly Office in Brussels** – a considerable amount of work went into agreeing the basic principles with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, agreeing a lease for premises with the Wales European Centre, arranging computers and other office equipment, and recruiting staff. The office was launched in September 2000, though staff had been in place since mid June 2000.
2. **UKRep** – good links have been established with UKRep, and these have been strengthened since the establishment of the Assembly's office in Brussels. Giles Paxman, the Head of Political Affairs at UKRep, gave a presentation to officials in Cardiff in May.
3. **Wales European Centre** – the Assembly joined the Wales European Centre in April 2000. The negotiations had to be handled carefully to ensure the Assembly's membership did not distort the balance of influence between existing members, and the Protocol and Service Level Agreement have been drafted to reflect this. Three Assembly Members have been appointed to serve as Directors, and they have attended a number of meetings this year.
4. **Wales Forum on European Affairs** – two meetings have been held, and both have been well attended by partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Speakers have included Commissioner Kinnock and former Commissioner Lord Leon Britton of Spennithorne.
5. **Euro Taskforce for Wales** – the European Affairs Division has provided secretariat support for the Taskforce since March 2000 (this role was previously undertaken by Financial Accountability Division).
6. **Secondments** – the European Affairs Division has been working with Personnel Management to improve the system for obtaining information about secondment opportunities in European institutions and UKRep. Individuals interested in secondments have been identified, and suitable opportunities for them will be identified as they arise.
7. **Council of Ministers** – two Assembly Ministers have attended meetings of the Council of Ministers as part of the UK delegation, and following a slow start procedures are now in place to ensure that Assembly Ministers receive information about forthcoming meetings and that policy Divisions are able to advise.
8. **MINECOR** – the Assembly has been represented at Ministerial level at meetings of MINECOR on a number of occasions. Keith Vaz, Minister for Europe, visited Cardiff in September as part of his campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of the UK's membership of the European Union.
9. **EU Directives** – a system to track Directives has been put in place to ensure that the Assembly complies with legal requirements to implement EU Directives through subordinate legislation in areas where the Assembly has the legal power to do so. No Directives have been passed since January 2000 which require Assembly legislative action, though this may change as more Designation Orders are made.
10. **Strategic Developments at a EU level** – officials have been tracking the progress of the Inter-governmental Conference, and provided advice on the few occasions when it has been necessary for the Assembly to intervene. Important policy developments such as the Lisbon Conclusions continue to be monitored and are brought to the attention of relevant Divisions.
11. **Enlargement** – the Assembly has hosted a number of visits from delegations from applicant countries over the past eighteen months. Officials continue to monitor the process of enlargement, as well as opportunities to participate in Twinning projects.
12. **Increased Awareness amongst Policy Divisions** – a series of meetings were recently held with

all Groups and Divisions within the Assembly to raise awareness of the implications of EU policy for their work. Contacts have been identified in each of the relevant policy areas, and officials in the European Affairs Division will maintain contact with them and assist them in enhancing their understanding of the EU.

## **Compliance**

Section 33, 40 & 85 of the Government of Wales Act in conjunction with a range of Assembly functions. These powers have been delegated to the First Minister and to staff. There are no issues of regularity or propriety.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no additional financial implications for the Assembly arising from the activities covered in this Committee Paper as all expenditure will be accommodated either with existing programme or administration costs budgets. Financial Planning Division has been consulted about this paper and are content with the financial aspects

## **Contact Point**

European Affairs Division

## **Annex 3A**

### **Members of the European Strategy Group**

Dr Hywel Ceri Jones (Chair)

Ms Rhiannon Bevan (National Federation of Women's Institutes)

Ms Catherine Eva (European Commission's Representation in  
Wales)

Ms Mair Francis (Dove Workshop)

Mr Carl Hadley (Welsh TECs)

Dr Elizabeth Haywood (CBI Wales)

Professor Jim Hughes (Wales European Centre)  
Mr Colin Jones (Welsh Local Government Association)

Ms Eluned Morgan (MEP)

Professor Kevin Morgan (Cardiff University)

Professor Teresa Rees (Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales)

Mr David Rowe-Beddoe (Welsh Development Agency)

Mr Meirion Thomas (Cardiff Business School)

Professor Robin Williams (University of Swansea)

Dr Victoria Winckler (Welsh Local Government Association)

Mr George Wright (Wales Transport and General Workers  
Union)

Mr Alan Lansdown (Welsh Office)

Miss Anna Coleman (Welsh Office)

## **REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY GROUP ANNEX 3B**

### **Review of the follow-up to the Recommendations**

**SUMMARY OF  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**COMMENTS MADE TO  
THE EUROPEAN  
COMMITTEE**

**ACTION TAKEN BY THE  
END OF OCTOBER 2000**

**1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 1999**

1) We propose that a succinct review of the linkages between each of the devolved policy areas and EU

legislation, policy and initiatives be

prepared by the Welsh Office.

(para

4.3).

For action in coming months.

The First Secretary asked Assembly Secretaries to commission Policy Review reports from relevant policy Divisions on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1999. Five reports were prepared and all were sent to the relevant Assembly Secretaries to present to Subject Committees as follows :

- Local Government Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1999
- Economic Development Committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2000
- Health and Social Services Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2000
- Post 16 Education Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2000
- Agriculture and Rural Development Committee on the TBA

2. We recommend that the public,

private and civil sectors should all be

actively associated in the reviews

referred to above and in a critical

Agreed.

The reports were prepared in-house by Assembly Officials. Broader consultation could be undertaken when the next set of Policy Reviews are undertaken.

examination of future lines  
of

development (para 4.5).

- We recommend that the First Secretary should allocate responsibility for Europe to one of the Secretaries for inclusion in his or her portfolio (para 4.5).

The First Secretary will have overall responsibility for European affairs, and will chair the Assembly's Committee on European Affairs. The Assembly

Secretary for Economic Development will be responsible for the European aspects of that portfolio, and will be a member of the European Affairs Committee.

The First Minister has overall responsibility for European affairs, whilst each Assembly Secretary is responsible for the impact of EU policy on their specific portfolios.

4) We further recommend that the

Secretary who is assigned

responsibility for Europe should chair

a special standing Committee on

The Assembly established a Committee on European Affairs under Standing Order 15. This Committee is Chaired by the First Minister.

European  
Policy (para  
4.8).

5) We recommend that the First Secretary and Secretary for Europe be encouraged to make an annual visit, together with their key partners from Wales, to meet with senior representatives of the EU institutions (para 4.8).

6) We recommend that the Assembly's subject committees be invited to review the European aspects of their agenda at least once a month (para 4.10).

7. The standing committee would advise the Assembly and its Executive Committee on all European issues affecting the interests of Wales. (para 4.12).

The First Secretary supports this view. He visited Brussels in January to meet Commissioners and WEC and believes the committee as a whole should undertake a visit later this year.

Standing orders allow for this. The First Secretary has expressed the view that each committee must be steeped in the European dimension of its work, and that each Assembly Secretary must understand how Europe impacts on his or her portfolio.

Standing Order 15.1-3 sets out the Committee's remit.

The First Secretary has visited Brussels on 2 further occasions and met senior representatives of the EU institutions each time.

It is a matter for each Subject Committee to decide how to conduct its meetings and what to include on the Agenda. Each Subject Committee has the right to review European Union policies of relevance to their work, and have been encouraged to do so by the Committee on European Affairs on a number of occasions. Annex 3 lists activities to date.

The European Committee has a strategic role, whilst subject committees are responsible for monitoring the impact of European policy on their work.

8) We recommend that the most effective solution would be to locate responsibility for the co-ordinated use of the EU structural funds firmly within the subject committee dealing with Economic Development (para 4.15).

The Assembly Secretary for Economic Development is accountable for structural funds issues, so this also falls within the remit of the Economic Development Committee.

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9) We recommend that, on a quarterly basis, the Standing Committee should arrange to meet the Wales Forum on European Affairs (para 4.17).

See comment on recommendation<sup>12</sup> below.

The Wales Forum on European Affairs has met on two occasions. This is a large gathering and the type of quarterly meeting envisaged by the European Strategy Group would not be appropriate.

10) The Standing Committee should be able to invite EU officials to give evidence to it and appoint special European advisors to give expert Advice to the Committee as Appropriate (para 4.18).

Standing orders 8.14-15 allow for such action should the Committee wish to take it.

Standing orders 8.14-15 allow for such action should the Committee wish to take it.

Welsh Members of the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the head of the European Commission Office in Wales and the head of the Assembly Office in Brussels are all invited to attend meetings of the Standing Committee. Neither EU Officials nor special European advisors have been invited to give advice or evidence to the Committee at this stage.



11) We recommend that the Secretary of State should immediately set up a Welsh Forum on European Affairs to function until the National Assembly itself has had the

Opportunity to decide on the

Consultative arrangements it wishes to set in train ,(para 4.20). This forum

Should bring together representatives

of the different partner interests to

promote a dynamic Team-Wales

approach in Europe. (para 4.21).

12) We recommend that the Forum should have an independent chair to be appointed by the Secretary of State. The Forum should be serviced in its first year by the Welsh Office (para 4.23).

The Secretary of State held a meeting of a European Partnership in February 1999. A paper is being submitted to the Committee on European Affairs proposing establishment of a Wales Forum on European Affairs with a broad-based membership.

In order that the Assembly is fully engaged with the work of the Forum, it is proposed that the First Secretary, as chair of the European Affairs Committee, should also chair the Forum and that the other members of the Committee would also be members of the Forum.

The Wales Forum on European Affairs met on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999 and the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2000. About 150 participants from the public, private and voluntary sectors have participated at each event. Strategic EU policies of relevance to Wales have been discussed on each occasion.

The Forum is Chaired by the First Minister and serviced by Assembly officials.

13) In collaboration with the Assembly and its Standing Committee on European Policy, the Forum should be invited to arrange an annual event to review progress in the promotion of Wales in Europe and to identify the scope for further initiatives (para 4.24).

14) We recommend that continuing strong, co-ordinated action is required by the Welsh Office and its associated partners in concert with the UK authorities to ensure that West Wales and the Valleys are accorded Objective 1 status (para 4.29). We also recommend that the position of Wales in respect of the opportunities offered by Objectives 2 and 3 should also receive full attention in the forthcoming negotiations.

15) We welcome the creation of a special task force by the Secretary of State to take forward work on this subject. We recommend that, as a matter of urgency, the current partnership arrangements be strengthened with special attention given to the more effective mobilisation of the business sector and organisation representing civil society (para 4.31).

For further consideration once the Forum is established.

Objective 1 has been achieved for West Wales and the Valleys. Discussions continue on the geographical coverage of Objective 2. Objective 3 will apply to all of East Wales.

The Task Force preparing the structural funds documentation has wide representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors in Wales. The publication of its report is imminent.

The Wales Forum on European Affairs has been endorsed by the Standing Committee and has met on 2 occasions to date. The Committee is consulted on its programme of meetings.

Objective 1 status has been achieved for West Wales and the Valleys, Objective 2 status has been achieved for significant parts of East Wales, and Objective 3 status secured for the whole of East Wales.

The Taskforce completed its work at the end of 1999 and has since been replaced by a series of Monitoring Committees established on the "three thirds" principle of equal representation for the public, private and voluntary sectors.

16) The Welsh Office should as a matter of urgency provide the Secretary of State with an analysis of the implications for Wales of achieving Objective 1 status and of the capacity to absorb and to use wisely the new resources in the period 2001 to 2006 (para 4.34).

17) A high level fact finding team should visit the Republic of Ireland and Merseyside to analyse their systems for exploiting fully EU resources and in relation to the Republic, explore the scope for setting up joint ventures, exploiting in particular the potential of the INTERREG programme (para 4.35).

18) We recommend that the Welsh Office should prepare a review across the board of all EU policies, programmes and initiatives affecting Wales up to and including the year 2000. We recommend that the different partner organisations in Wales be actively associated in the conduct of this review (para 4.38).

The Secretary of State has received full briefing on these matters.

Visits to Ireland, Merseyside and the Scottish Highlands and Islands took place in 1998, in preparation for work on the structural funds documentation. A sub committee of the Task Force has been established particularly to examine the scope of the proposed Community Initiatives as they affect Wales.

See comment on recommendations 1 and 2.

The implications of Objective 1 status are well understood, and partners are now applying for grants to implement a range of Action Plans.

A number of visits were made to the Republic of Ireland and to Merseyside whilst the Objective 1 Single Programming Document was being prepared. Whilst there are important lessons for Wales from other areas, it became apparent that Objective 1 status was only one component in a range of factors accounting for the Republic of Ireland's recent economic success.

See comment on recommendations 1 and 2.

19) A briefing on the planned priorities of the Council presidencies over the next 2 years should be prepared by the Welsh Office to identify those Council meetings at which the Welsh Office could plan to be represented at Ministerial and official levels (para .40).

20) We recommend that the Welsh Office prepare for the Secretary of State a review of the forthcoming reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the longer term implications for Wales, including the vital question of the impact on jobs (para 4.43).

21) We recommend that priority be given to strengthening the European dimension of education and training in Wales, especially at university, higher and further education levels and training. We recommend that the Secretary of State commissions the Welsh Office to review the current position (para 4.44 and 4.45).

Early notice of medium-term Presidency priorities is not generally available, but attention will be given to collecting such information as can be obtained.

The Secretary of State has been briefed on these matters and further briefing will come forward to Assembly Secretaries as necessary.

This work has been commissioned and will be subject to a full report. A contract is being put to tender to assist the office to deal with developing European links

At its meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2000 the Committee on European Affairs decided to meet in January and July each year in future to consider the priorities of incoming Presidencies of the Council of Ministers. Assembly Ministers receive regular reports on forthcoming Council of Ministers meetings, and discuss the appropriateness of attending with Whitehall counterparts in accordance with the Concordat on Co-ordination of European Union Policy Issues.

The Assembly Minister for Rural Development receives regular briefings on all aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy from Assembly officials.

Assembly officials are aware of the European dimension of education and training in Wales, and provide advice to Assembly Ministers as necessary. Higher and Further Education institutions and CETW are also aware of the importance of European Union policies and grants for their work.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning attended the Education and Youth Council on 9<sup>th</sup>

November 2000.

22) We further recommend that a small number of scholarships be awarded annually by the Welsh Office to enable Welsh students to follow the European specialist courses at the college of Europe in Bruges and Florence (para 4.46).

There are 50 places on scholarship programmes for England and Wales. Officials are investigating the possibility of having separate allocations for Wales.

This recommendations needs to be pursued to see if it is viable. This will be considered by NAED

23) We recommend that higher and further education institutions, the business sector, the WDA and local authorities should be invited to present their proposals jointly with regard to participation in the next financial programme of the EU for research and Technological Development as well as in European programmes of support for innovation and the information society (para 4.47 and 4.48).

The organisations and institutions involved are being invited to consider the recommendations.

Higher Education institutions, the WDA and businesses are familiar with the EU's Research and Development, innovation and Information Society programmes, and the WDA is hosting an Innovation Relay to advise Welsh businesses.

24) We recommend that the Welsh Office should also prepare a brief synopsis of the implications of the new Amsterdam Treaty for Wales, in particular with regards to public health, employment and social policy. We recommend that the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales and other interested bodies such as Disability Wales should be invited to comment of the implications of these new provisions for Wales (para 4.49).

Work is in hand on these recommendations and the views of the statutory equality organisations in Wales, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and Disability Rights Commission, is being requested

The relevant lead Divisions are aware of the implications of the Treaty of Amsterdam on their areas of work:

- The enhanced definition of discrimination under Article 13 was discussed at the Wales Forum on European Affairs on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2000, and has been a feature of discussions relating to Objective 3 and EQUAL
- An initial review of EU

health policy and its impact on the development of health policies and strategies in Wales has been undertaken.

- Steps have been taken to ensure that the main Structural Fund Programmes in Wales (Objectives 1 and 3) contribute towards the objectives in the UK Employment Action Plan and that these programmes take account of the issues raised in the Commission's Joint Employment Reports. Similar action is being taken in respect of the new EQUAL Community Initiative

25) We recommend that in collaboration with the WDA and local authorities, the Welsh Office should present to the Secretary of State proposals to encourage co-operative ventures with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which are candidates for accession to the European Union (para 4.51).

The First Secretary has proposed that the European Affairs Committee should address the implications for Wales of EU enlargement at its November meeting.

The Wales European Centre has recently published a report on this issue and is currently assessing the results of a questionnaire which was distributed to its members earlier this year. The Assembly does not have sufficient resources to participate in twinning projects at this time.

26) We recommend that the Welsh Language Board be invited to review the policy of the EU in further development support in future to the less widely used European language (para 4.51)

The Board has been invited to pursue.

The Welsh Language Board is a member of the Wales European Centre and is aware of EU programmes and policies which affect the Welsh language. The Board maintains contacts with a growing network of European organisations involved in minority language planning, including the umbrella body, the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages

27) We recommend that the Assembly establish a European team with a core of policy staff well versed in EU affairs, possessing good linguistic skills and capable of building all the necessary relations with the EU (para 4.54)

European Affairs Division will continue to be in the lead on European matters generally, but other Divisions will pursue European matters as appropriate in their own fields. Support is available for staff seeking to develop their linguistic skills.

European Affairs Division will continue to be in the lead on European matters generally, but other Divisions will pursue European matters as appropriate in their own fields. Support is available for staff seeking to develop their linguistic skills.

28) We recommend that the Assembly should build a system for secondment of staff to the European institutions and to UKREP (para 4.55)

Posts are advertised internally as they arise

The Assembly has two officials based in Brussels, both of whom are members of UKRep. In addition, one official is seconded to the European Commission and another to the Wales European Centre. Posts are advertised internally as they arise, and steps have been taken to encourage Assembly officials to apply for such posts.

29) We recommend that the (European) concordat between the devolved administrations and Whitehall be based on a spirit of mutual trust, between the devolved administrations on the basis of full and continuing involvement of the Assembly secretaries in policy formulation, negotiation and implementation (para 5.3).

30) We recommend that the Welsh Office strengthens its presence in UKRep through the secondment of a small core of staff from the Welsh Office to work in key policy areas of concern to Wales and to hold a watching brief on EU developments likely to affect Welsh interests (para 6.3).

31) We recommend that the Welsh Office considers the forthcoming programmes of Council and Presidencies' business to identify areas of interest to the Assembly (para 7.1).

It is expected that the draft concordat will be published later in the year.

Two names have recently gone forward for two posts in UKRep

Agreed. This will fall to European Affairs Division.

The Concordat was published on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999, and the Committee on European Affairs considered a report on this issue on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1999.

The Assembly has two officials based in Brussels, both of whom are members of UKRep. Posts are advertised internally as they arise, and steps have been taken to encourage Assembly officials to apply for such posts. Assembly officials have applied for three posts over the past eighteen months, but have not been successful.

The Committee on European Affairs will meet in January and July each year to consider the priorities of incoming Presidencies of the Council of Ministers.

A representative of the Swedish Embassy will discuss the priorities of their Presidency at the November meeting of the Committee.



32) We consider that the Welsh Office needs to develop further its present practice to place staff on secondment to different Directorates General within the Commission (para 8.3).

See comment on recommendation 28 above. An officer is about to undertake a Stagiare (mini secondment) to DGXVI, this has been arranged through the Cabinet Office although we pay the total cost

The Assembly has set a target of 3 secondments in 2000/2001, rising to 6 by 2003 in its Strategic Plan. The Committee on European Affairs received a report outlining steps which have been taken to achieve this at its meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2000.

33) We recommend that the Welsh Office prepare a review of the present participation of Welsh officials experts in the different EU committees and working groups with a view to securing a much higher level of participation (para 8.5)

For action in coming months.

The European Affairs Division has recently raised this issue with policy Divisions, and the creation of the Assembly's office in Brussels will assist in identifying suitable opportunities for Welsh officials to participate in such Committees and Working Groups.

34) Since only members of the Assembly itself will be entitled to sit on the Assembly's committees, we recommend that the Assembly should examine how best to ensure the necessary liaison and exchange of ideas and information with the Welsh MEP's (para 9.4).

The First Secretary has proposed that meetings of the European Affairs Committee be timetabled as far as possible to permit attendance by Welsh MEPs and members of COR and ECOSOC; that all of these would receive Committee papers, and that all would be asked to report from time to time on European developments of relevance to Wales.

Welsh Members of the European Parliament, Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee are invited to attend every meeting of the Committee on European Affairs, and members have attended when available. The creation of the Assembly's office in Brussels will assist in liaison between the Assembly and Welsh representatives on European Union institutions.

35) We recommend that the Welsh members of the Committee of the Regions could be invited to give evidence to the Assembly's standing Committee on European policy and to participate actively in the Wales Forum. They should be expected to ensure a systematic flow of information to the Assembly on the work and opinions and delivered by the Committee of the Regions and in particular from the sub-committees on which the Welsh members may sit (para 10.3)

36) We recommend that the Welsh representatives who will be nominated by the Assembly to sit on the Economic and Social Committee could be invited to give evidence to the standing Committee on European Policy and to participate actively in the Wales Forum (para 11.1).

37) We recommend that the scope for developing collaboration with other regions within the UK and their European links and machinery should be carefully considered, most especially with Scotland and Northern Ireland (para 13.1)

See comment on recommendations 34-35 above.

The First Secretary intends to follow up initial contacts in order to promote contacts between Assembly Secretaries and with their Scottish and Northern Irish counterparts

The Assembly has one full member and one alternate on the Committee of the Regions, with the Welsh Local Government Association having a similar representation. All four individuals are invited to attend meetings of the Committee on European Affairs and the Wales Forum on European Affairs. The Assembly's representatives attended Committee of the Regions meetings for the first time in September 2000.

Welsh representatives on the Economic and Social Committee are invited to attend meetings of the Committee on European Affairs and the Wales Forum on European Affairs.

The First Secretary has regular contact with his counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland, with the Joint Ministerial Council providing a good opportunity for such links. Officials from a range of Divisions have established links with counterparts, and officials from the European Affairs Division regularly meet their counterparts from Scotland and Northern Ireland.

38) We suggest that this factor (the interest of the Council of Isles in European issues of relevance to the regions) be taken into account by the Assembly in designating its representatives to the Council of the Isles so as to build good links with the European strategy which the Assembly will be pursuing (para 13.2)

39) We recommend that Wales strengthens its direct links and partnership arrangements with other countries and regions in Europe which can bring economic, social and cultural benefits to Wales (para 14.1)

40) We recommend that, with the assistance of the Wales European Centre, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Development Agency, the Welsh Office could be invited to present an assessment of the present set of regional links with recommendations for their future development (para 14.3)

The British-Irish Council has not yet been established, and no Assembly representation on it decided upon, but the First Secretary anticipates that he will wish to be personally involved with its work.

Particular attention is currently being given to further development of Wales' links with the "Four Motors".

See comment on recommendation 39 above.

The British-Irish Council met for the first time in December 1999 and again in October 2000. The Assembly Cabinet is represented on it by the First Secretary and two of his colleagues appropriate to the agenda for each meeting. European policy is outside the Council's direct remit but underpins its discussions on a range of issues.

The National Assembly for Wales is seeking to work alongside and in partnership with the Four Motor regions of Europe. The International Relations Unit will co-ordinate the Assembly's strategy and response and are in the process of identifying details of the Assembly's international interests and where there is potential for future joint working at an international level.

A co-ordination group involving other public sector organisations with an international remit has been established to encompass the international aspects and functions of sponsored bodies and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.

41) We stress the importance of embedding a strong European dimension in all relevant activities and departments of the Welsh Development Agency. (para 15.1).

For the WDA to pursue.

For the WDA to pursue.

42) We take the view that the Welsh Development Agency should be actively involved in the next phase of programming of structural funds in Wales (para 15.2)

The WDA is playing an active role in the Partnership developing the structural funds programme.

The WDA played an active role in the Partnership which developed the structural funds programmes, and will have an important role in implementation and in Programme Monitoring Committees.

43) We recommend that all bodies which are representative of Welsh interests should be invited to produce an annual assessment of measures taken to promote a strong European and international dimension to their activities (para 15.3).

It would be open to the European Affairs Committee to issue such an invitation.

It is a matter for each organisation to consider how it deals with EU issues.

44) We recommend that the local authorities be actively involved with the formulation of the overall strategic presentation of the next phase of structural funds in Wales and in particular the identification of imaginative, new ways of creating jobs, promoting employability of people and combating social exclusion (para 16.3).

The WLGA has been closely involved in preparation of the structural funds documentation, and two individuals have been seconded to the Welsh Office to assist in this process.

The WLGA was closely involved in preparation of the structural funds documentation, and is represented on the Programme Monitoring Committees. Individual local authorities have an important role in developing Local Action Plans, and are involved in a number of Regional Action Plan partnerships.

45) We recommend that the future role of the Wales European Centre be reviewed in the first instance by the partnership to consider how its future role could fit into the developing overall Welsh strategy (paras 17.1 and 17.3).

46) Building on the presence of the WEC, we recommend that the Assembly and the present partners could consider setting up together a Ty Cymru or Wales Centre in Brussels (para 17.4).

47) By working closely with the UKRep, on the basis of an open flow of information, the centre could serve as a base for a team-Wales presence in Brussels capable of meeting the needs of the Assembly and its partners in facilitating contacts with the EU institutions and building collaboration with other European regions (para 17.5).

The Wales European Centre Board is currently giving consideration to this, paving the way for consideration by the committee.

A paper will come forward to the Committee on the future role of the Wales European Centre and the Assembly's relations with it.

UKREP already liaises with WEC. It will be important that any development of WEC is not such as to inhibit such liaison in the future.

The Assembly joined the Wales European Centre in April 2000. The additional source of income has enabled the WEC to expand its staff and its activities.

The WEC recently moved to new premises, and this has enabled the Assembly's office in Brussels to be located within the WEC's building. All Welsh interests are therefore located together which provides a focal point for Wales links with the EU and other European regions.

The Assembly has two officials based in Brussels who are members of UKRep, but work from the Assembly's office in the WEC building. Assembly officials and WEC staff have a good working relationship, though confidentiality must be maintained when Assembly officials deal with UKRep papers.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Rec nos</b>	<b>Response</b>
Post-16	6,7,19	No involvement
ARD	6,7,19	Most items of business have a European dimension. Committee hopes to visit Brussels later this year.
ARD	1	No report yet received by ARD. Clerk aims to put any paper to the Committee before the Brussels visit.
LGH	6,7,19	No involvement but old LGE committee (changed in March) did look at impact of EU policies on Wales - had impact on EPT areas.
EPT	6,7,19	EPT has not considered impact since its establishment (see above) but have considered how it might do this. (Suggestion from Martin Evans that it would be sensible to have a single paper for all committees on how other member states deal with EU legislation. Inputs could be commissioned from UKREP/FCO and from the University. Not yet discussed with appropriate contacts.)
HSS	6,7,19	Chair of Committee and other party spokespersons are considering a letter from Val Feld asking the Committee to consider the wider use of European funding. The Committee has not otherwise looked at any specific European issue and has no plans to do so.
EDC	6,7,19	6& 7 The EDC has a strong interest in structural funds and always includes them on the agenda. Objective 1 has been scrutinised from the draft SPD stage and EDC is currently involved in scrutinising implementation. Regular updates are received from the Monitoring Committee and John Clarke, the Chief Executive of WEFO, attends most EDC meetings. Objective 2 and 3 SPDs have also been scrutinised and on 18.10 EDC looked at the smaller programmes - LEADER, INTERREG and EQUAL.  19 Council presidencies and Council of Ministers meetings have not been discussed at EDC.
Pre-16	6,7,19	Nothing considered by the Pre-16 committee relates specifically to Europe. However, references in recommendations 21, 22 and 23 to further and higher education may need to be looked at by the new education committee at some stage.

