

European & External Affairs Committee

Date:	28 February 2007
Time:	9.30 – 12.30
Venue:	Committee Room 3, Senedd, Cardiff Bay
Title:	EU legislative and policy priorities for 2007

Purpose of Paper

1. This paper invites Members to note the European Union policy and legislative issues in 2007 of relevance to the remit of this Committee and which it may wish to refer to in its Legacy Report as issues to be taken forward in the Third Assembly.
2. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has provided a summary of the European Commission's Legislative and Work Programme 2007 (hereafter, 'Work Programme') - see paper EUR(2) 02-07(p5) - and its implications for the WAG.

Background

3. The European Commission's Work Programme for 2007 was published on 24 October 2006. It lists all strategic and priority items which the Commission will propose in 2007. See here:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2007_en.pdf

4. Germany will drive forward EU business in the Council of Ministers as it holds the EU Presidency for the first half of 2007, followed by Portugal in the second half. Slovenia will be the first of the "new" Member States to hold the reins for six months in January 2008. For the first time, the three Presidencies have produced an 18-month programme, see here:

http://www.eu2007.de/en/The_Council_Presidency/trio/index.html

5. The Subject Committees and the Equal Opportunities Committee have considered the items of priority and relevance to their respective remits – see Annex A for a summary of those identified by them. These items should be noted in the Committees' respective legacy papers. The European and External Affairs may wish to include these in its legacy report as well for consideration by its successor Committee, some of which may be of more immediate relevance to Wales than the more

strategic issues identified below.

6. The protocol for dealing with EU issues, as agreed by the Panel of Chairs, is attached as Annex B.

Significant items on the EU agenda in 2007

7. Members Research and Committee Services have analysed the Commission's 2007 work programme for items which correspond to this Committee's strategic remit in relation to EU matters. These are mainly identified on the basis of the Commission's 2007 political priorities and in view of their strategic and overarching nature, relevance to Wales and taking into account this Committee's previous interests. They are grouped according to the EU's current political priorities.

The future of Europe

8. The German Presidency will be marked by the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome which it will commemorate on 25 March in Berlin with Heads of State and Government, where a political declaration will be adopted on European Values which will feed into discussions on the future of the Constitutional Treaty.

a. The future of the EU Constitutional Treaty – the German Presidency will revive discussions on the Constitution during its Presidency. Following consultations with Member State governments, it will present a report at the June European Council which should be taken forward by the Portuguese Presidency. The aim is to find an agreement before the European Parliament elections in June 2009.

b. Follow up to white paper on European communication policy – this will set out steps to address the gap between EU institutions, Member States and citizens. It will focus on establishing common principles for communication rights; empowering citizens (civic education); co-operation with media; analysing and understanding public opinion as well as developing partnerships with all key institutional partners in the Member States to add stronger recognition of EU dimension in national political discourses.

Expected: March 2007.

c. Strategy paper on enlargement – The December 2006 European Council concluded that the EU would proceed with its commitments to Croatia, Turkey and the Western Balkans. This "Strategy Paper" will contain the main findings of the Progress Reports for these countries and include proposals for policy recommendations.

Expected date of adoption: October 2007.

Social Europe, economic reform and the single market

9. One of the most significant items on the EU's horizon is the wide-ranging review of the EU budgetary priorities in 2008. Some items on this year's agenda will contribute towards thinking in

this area. In the meantime, the German and Portuguese Presidencies will focus on delivering the next steps in the EU's economic reform agenda, taking forward the Lisbon agenda with a particular emphasis on better regulation at the Spring Council. Apart from the fundamental review of the single market, the Commission will also address areas within the internal market such as health and social services which were excluded from the scope of the services directive (adopted in December 2006).

a. Stocktaking of European social reality – in order to strengthen Europe's response to globalisation, the Commission has committed itself to a stocktaking of the reality of European society with a particular emphasis on questions of access and opportunity. The Communication will analyse major trends in societal changes and aims at building a new consensus on the social challenges facing Europeans. It will assist in identifying appropriate policy responses and inform the debate on the future priorities for the EU budget.

Expected date of adoption: 21 February 2007.

b. Mid-term review of the implementation of the Social Agenda 2005-2010 - the EU's Social Agenda (2005-2010) is its roadmap in the employment and social sphere of the Lisbon Strategy. In light of the results to date, the communication will propose a new agenda for solidarity and access to opportunities and detail ways to improve its implementation. It will also build on the conclusions of the social reality stocktaking exercise above.

Expected date of adoption: November 2007.

c. The fourth report on economic and social cohesion – as well as reporting on the contribution by European and national policies towards economic and social cohesion, the report is likely to set out policy orientations for the future of regional policy. This is an opportunity for the Commission to set out its case for a continued regional policy with a view to the EU's budget review.

Expected date of adoption: Spring 2007.

d. The single market review - the Commission committed itself to a review of the single market last year. It will assess the experience of the Single Market since 1992 and see what action is needed to ensure that it continues to deliver on its economic promise and that citizens reap the benefits. The review should set out a vision for the Single Market and offer policy directions for future.

Expected: 21 February 2007

e. White paper on health strategy – while the Commission recognises that EU competence in health is limited, it believes that introducing a health strategy can set a framework for enhanced co-operation with the Member States and other stakeholders to optimise the delivery of health improvements across the EU.

Expected: June 2007

f. A community framework for safe and efficient health services (legislative proposal) - this concerns

issues linked to the mobility of patients and health professionals between Member States and healthcare developments. The objective is to establish a legal framework to ensure patient safety wherever healthcare is provided throughout the EU and address uncertainties over the application of European law to health services that create obstacles to cross-border healthcare.

Expected date of adoption: June 2007

g. Communication on a European strategy for social services of general interest – a Communication on social services of general interest in the European Union was published on 26 April 2006. Following that consultation process, this forthcoming communication will clarify the application of European Community rules to social services – how they can operate within them and be modernised. It will also propose further steps to develop a systematic approach in this field.

Expected date of adoption: November 2007

h. Follow up to the green paper on maritime policy - this Communication will summarise the results of the consultation on the Green Paper on maritime policy, (ending on 30 June 2007), draw political conclusions on the development of an integrated EU approach to maritime policy and will present certain follow-up actions that can be implemented in the short term.

Expected: November 2007

Climate change and energy security

10. Making progress on the EU's common energy policy is the foremost European and International priority for the EU, as is addressing the challenges of climate change. The Spring Council – the meeting of Heads of State and Governments on 8-9 March 2007 - will be almost wholly focused on addressing these issues.

a. Strategic energy review for Europe and the EU energy action plan (includes legislative elements) – the Commission presented the first strategic energy review in January 2007 accompanied by an action plan with individual actions for the development of an EU energy policy. It sets the scene for a long-term approach to improve the internal market, to accelerate the use of new technologies, to diversify and secure supplies inside and from outside the EU and to promote energy efficiency.

Adopted: 10 January 2007

b. Towards a European climate change adaptation programme – this is the follow-up to the green paper on adaptation (whose publication has been delayed until March 2007) and will list actions on adaptation to be undertaken by the Commission. It aims to assist Member States to reduce their vulnerability and increase their resilience against the negative impacts of climate change.

Expected: November 2007

c. Green paper on post 2012 climate change – the Green Paper will put forward options for EU

climate change policy and the perspectives for international co-operation post-2012.

Expected: April 2007

Action for Committee

11. The Committee is invited to note the relevant issues from the Commission's work programme for 2007, as suggested in paragraphs 8-10 taking into account the Welsh Assembly Government's Statement and any on-going items from 2006. These will then be included in the Committee's Legacy Report.

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Annex A

Commission's work programme 2007: Summary of items of interest identified by other Committees

Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

See (CWLS (2) 02-07 Paper 2), EU Policy and Legislative Priorities for 2007, 7 February 2007

a. Communication on Culture;

b. White Paper on Sport;

Education and Lifelong Learning

See (ELLS(2) 03-07 (paper 6), EU policy and legislative priorities for 2007, 14 February 2007

a. Erasmus Mundus - Decision establishing a programme to improve the quality of higher education and promote intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries;

b. Recommendation on the Establishment of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training;

- c. Recommendation on the quality of teacher education in the member states;
- d. Communication on the draft 2008 joint interim report on the implementation of the "Education and Training 2010 work programme";
- e. Communication from the European Commission: Modernising school education in Europe.

Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee

See (EIN(2) 01-07 Paper 7), EU policy and legislative priorities for 2007, 17 January 2007

- a. EU regional policy - the 4th report on economic and social cohesion;
- b. Communication on delivering the Lisbon agenda through the structural funds programmes;
- c. Energy policy – the Strategic European Energy Review and the accompanying package on issues such as renewable energies, clean coal and nuclear energy and its follow up;
- d. Communication on the future development of the European Research Area;
- e. Green paper on urban transport;
- f. Action plan for developing a rail freight network;
- g. Clarification of state aid rules for the rail transport sector;
- h. Follow-up to the Green Paper on an EU Maritime Policy;
- i. Proposal for a European Ports Policy;
- j. The mid-term review of the implementation of the EU's Social Agenda.

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

See EPC(2)-01-07 (Paper 7), EU policy and legislative priorities for 2007, 25 January 2007.

- a. White Paper "Towards a European Climate Change Adaptation Programme";
- b. Green Paper on Post-2012 Climate Change;
- c. Communication on maritime policy;
- d. Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production;

- e. CAP Health Check;
- f. Communication on the Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013;
- g. Regulation on animal by-products;

Health and Social Services Committee

Items to be considered for the Committee's legacy report, 14 March 2007.

- a. Communication on a European Strategy for Social Services of General Interest;
- b. Community Framework for safe and efficient health services;
- c. White Paper on health strategy: Health in Europe, a strategic approach;
- d. White Paper on Nutrition;
- e. Communication on Organ Donation and Transplantation;
- f. Mental Health Strategy.

Local Government and Public Services Committee

See (LGPS(2)-01-07 Paper 6), EU policy and legislative priorities for 2007, 18 January 2007.

- a. Communication on the implementation of national strategies for Green public procurement based on EU-wide target setting, monitoring and benchmarking.

Social Justice and Regeneration

See (SJR(2)-02-07 Paper 1), EU policy and legislative priorities for 2007, 1 February 2007.

- a. Social Reality Stocktaking;
- b. Green Paper on the Establishment of the Second Phase of the Common European Asylum System;
- c. Decision designating 2010 as the European Year of combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Equal Opportunities Committee

See (EOC(2)-02-07(p9)), Revised paper on suggested areas of interest in the European Commission 2007 work programme, 28 February 2007

- a. Legislative proposal for a general framework directive addressing labour migration;
- b. Green Paper on the establishment of the second phase of the common European Asylum System;
- c. Social reality stocktaking;
- d. Communication on the pay gap between women and men.

Annex B

Protocol for committee scrutiny and action on EU policy

This protocol was agreed by the Panel of Chairs in April 2005.

1. The key to influencing proposals is to engage with the right players at the right time. This is a suggested general approach to European issues, Committees may wish to consider some or all of the following in order to maximise their effectiveness:
 - i. Inviting the Welsh Assembly Government to explain the impact of a proposal on Wales, to give its response to the proposal and explain how it is making its views known to the UK government and Commission.
 - ii. Inviting a Commission representative, UK government officials or MEPs for a direct exchange of views.
 - iii. Inviting Welsh or UK organisations to the committee or expert witnesses to give their views on any particular issue, (e.g. business representatives, ASPBs, Welsh Local Government Association, social and environmental NGOs, universities).
 - iv. EU proposals may sometimes cut across several committees remit and will therefore require co-ordination of views and perspectives. In such a case, it may be appropriate for one committee to take the lead.
 - v. Having agreed its position on an issue, Committees may wish to promote this to the key institutions in the decision-making process, and other relevant players, as follows:
 - vi. The European Parliament: for example, by communicating this to Wales MEPs and inviting them to pursue the issue in the European Parliament. Channels open to MEPs to do so include:
 - influencing relevant EP committee rapporteurs;
 - tabling amendments;
 - tabling questions to the Commission and representatives of the Council of Ministers;
 - influencing the position of their EP political grouping.
- i. The European Commission:
 - by responding to Commission consultations;
 - inviting the Commission to Committee meetings or engaging in dialogue with the

- Commission through other opportunities, such as European conferences;
- write to the relevant Commissioner responsible for the policy to promote the Committee's view.
- i. In addition to scrutinising the WAG's position, the Committee may wish to write to the relevant UK government Minister to make its view known.
 - ii. Other potential players include:
 - the European committees of the Houses of Parliament, for example, submitting evidence to House of Lords' enquiries;
 - Assembly Members of the Committee of the Regions may table amendments to the CoR's reports;
 - European associations on which the Assembly is represented and other networks of like-minded regions and organisations. Forming a pan-European coalition on an issue is important for having a wider impact and takes the debate beyond national boundaries.
 - i. Monitoring the progress of the proposal through the decision-making process, either through updates from the Welsh Assembly Government in particular on the outcome of Council meetings (Minister's report, for example), or through European update briefings from the Members' Research Service.
 - ii. In the interest of transparency, the Committee Chair should request that WAG systematically brief committees on the outcome of Council of Ministers meetings which are relevant to the committee's remit.
 - iii. It may be necessary for the committee to re-assess its view in light of the evolving negotiations and to issue a further response at a later stage.