

European and External Affairs Committee

EUR(3)02-07 (p2): 25 September 2007

Forward Work Programme""

1. Purpose

The purpose is to consider topics for possible inclusion in the forward work programme.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

Considers the matters set out in this paper, including the annexes; and

Indicates priority areas for scrutiny, in addition to the inquiry on the European Investment Bank, to help the clerk prepare a forward work programme for autumn 2007 and spring 2008.

3. Background

At the informal meeting on 12 July 2007, the Committee requested further information on priority European and international issues, with an indication of any time critical issues; for example, responses to consultations. This paper provides a summary of key issues, with suggestions for work which the Committee might wish to undertake; and a list

4. European Union Policy and Legislative Issues

In relation to European Union policy issues, the suggested areas of work for the Committee reflect those considered in the European Commission's 2007 legislative and work programme by the Committees of the Second Assembly. The items were identified in view of their strategic and overarching nature, relevance to Wales and taking into account previous interests: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0629en01.pdf Since then, the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2008 has been published (21 February 2007). The paper therefore picks up on items of interest which can be expected in 2008, to allow a longer perspective and planning period: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0065en01.pdf The Commission's Annual Work Programme for 2008 is expected to be published in October 2007 containing details of policy and legislative proposals. The Committee may wish to revise its work programme for 2008 in light of this document. There are some significant immediate issues which the Committee may wish to address through scrutiny of Welsh Ministers or by responding directly to the Commission, following evidence gathering:

Intergovernmental Conference on the Reform Treaty - concludes mid October 2007.

EU budgetary review (issues paper) - consultation closes Spring 2008.

Future of regional policy (4th Cohesion Report) - consultation closes end of 2007.

Common Agricultural Policy "Health Check" - consultation opens November 2007.

Further details are provided in the annexes on these and other strategic EU issues (Annex A); other EU issues, forthcoming and on-going (Annex B); and significant EU legislation which are due to be implemented in the UK (Annex C). The Committee may also wish to scrutinise the Welsh Assembly Government on the commitment made in the coalition agreement, "One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales", to "explore with the Westminster government the making of an official application to the Council of Ministers for the Welsh language to receive official EU language and working language status" (see section 9 "A rich and diverse culture", under the sub-heading "Supporting the Welsh Language", page 35).

5. External Affairs

The Welsh Assembly Government has made a number of commitments in the "One Wales" coalition agreement in relation to its international priorities (see section nine of the agreement, under the sub-heading "Placing Wales in the World"). The Committee could consider reviewing the Welsh Assembly Government's international strategies at an appropriate date, in view of the "One Wales" commitments:

Wales, A World Nation - Strategic Framework (December 2004);

Wales for Africa: The Wales International Sustainable Development Framework (October 2006) - highlights what the Welsh Assembly Government can do to help deliver the UN Millennium Development Goals to halve global poverty by 2015. The Framework is reviewed annually. Progress on the Framework is reported to the Assembly as part of the Annual Sustainable Development Report.

The Committee may also wish to consider in greater depth the Welsh Assembly Government's bilateral or multi-national relationships with other regions and countries.

6. Acknowledgement

This paper was prepared with the assistance of the Members' Research Service. **Committee Service**