

# European and External Affairs Committee

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## Update on the work of the National Assembly for Wales with CALRE, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies

### Introduction

1 This paper has been prepared as an update for the European and External Affairs Committee's ("The Committee") meeting on 08 June 2010, on the participation of the National Assembly for Wales in the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE).

2 The Committee last received an update on CALRE on 03 November 2009. The update paper for that meeting included background information on the work of CALRE, its structure and organisation, and the benefits of CALRE membership to the National Assembly for Wales. Members are referred to this paper for more detail on these areas.

3. This paper provides information on the activities of CALRE since November 2009 and those forthcoming for the rest of 2010.

4. The Committee is asked to note the contents of this paper.

### Activities since November 2009

5. In December 2009, the CALRE President, from Trento in Italy, submitted a letter to the European Commission President, as part of the consultation on Europe 2020 Strategy (see "Annex A"). The letter was prepared at the initiative of the National Assembly for Wales, and was based in large degree on the letter submitted by the European and External Affairs Committee's Chair to President Barroso. It called for recognition of the important role played by regional parliaments and governments in the implementation of the strategy on the ground, and expressed support for continuation of an EU-wide regional policy as an essential component of the new strategy.

6. The CALRE Standing Committee met in Brussels on 25 January 2010, which the Deputy Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler AM attended accompanied by Constitutional Adviser, Aled Eirug and Gregg Jones. At the meeting the CALRE Presidency presented the new web-site<sup>1</sup>, in particular drawing attention to the interactive "online forum" section that has been added, aimed at encouraging discussion, exchange of ideas and good practice between members.

7. At the meeting on 25 January, there was a discussion about the structures and functioning of CALRE, and whether or not a permanent secretariat and/or Brussels Office should be established to support the networks' activities. The Deputy Presiding Officer requested a detailed paper be prepared to look at the different options being suggested, including a cost analysis and implications in terms of fees to members, as a necessary precursor to any formal discussions of such issues.

8. At the second CALRE Standing Committee of 2010 took place in Madeira, Portugal on 17 April this debate was followed up with a broader discussion around reform of the internal rules of CALRE. The Assembly was not represented at this meeting, however, following the meeting a draft revision of the internal rules was circulated to members for comments before 31 May 2010. As these do not represent substantive changes, but are rather about "tidying up" the existing articles, the Assembly has not submitted any comments on the draft.

10. This matter will be debated further at the CALRE Standing Committee that takes place in San Sebastian on 8 July, which the Deputy Presiding Officer and Constitutional Adviser will both attend, with the aim of agreeing any changes for formal adoption at the Standing Committee and the Plenary Session of CALRE which takes place in Trento, Italy from 3-5 October. Should the discussion return to the need for a Brussels Office or creation of a permanent CALRE secretariat the Deputy Presiding Officer will reiterate the points she made at the Standing Committee on 25 January, about the need for a detailed paper outlining the options and including costs and revenue implications to CALRE members before any decision is taken on these matters.

11. Aled Eirug, the Constitutional Adviser, participated in the e-democracy Working Group met on 26 January 2010, and at the suggestion of Aled the group agreed to conduct a survey of the CALRE members to look at the extent to which e-democracy is being used on the ground. A questionnaire was circulated to members in March, and an analysis is being prepared by the Basque Parliament (which chair's the working group).

11. As noted in the paper to the Committee on 3 November 2009, CALRE is also a vehicle through which the Assembly is able to benefit through accessing the professional expertise of officials working within the member regional parliaments and legislatures of the network, in terms of best practice and exchange of information.

12. An example of this is a seminar being organised by Keith Bush, the Chief Legal Adviser and Director of Legal Services at the National Assembly for Wales, which will take place at the Assembly on 25 June 2010. The seminar will bring together lawyers from the Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly, the House of Lords and House of Commons to discuss a range of issues including the implementation of the Subsidiarity Protocol from the Treaty of Lisbon. Contacts have been made with the Parlament de Catalunya and Baden Württemberg to explore the possibility of a speaker from one of these parliaments participating in the seminar, on their experiences of implementing the subsidiarity protocol in the Treaty of Lisbon.

1. See <http://www.calrenet.eu/>