

COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS EUR-05-01(p.3)

Date	17 October 2001
Time	9.00am
Venue	Committee Room
Title	Working Group on Enlargement

Purpose

1. To report on the first meeting of the Working Group on Enlargement.

Recommendation

2. Members consider the recommendations put forward by the Working Group.

Background

3. At its last meeting on 28th June, the European Affairs Committee agreed

(with minor amendments) the draft terms of reference for a working group to consider enlargement issues. It was also agreed that the working group should report back to the next meeting of the European Affairs Committee with firm recommendations regarding the political approach the Assembly should take on the issue of twinning. This paper does that and goes a stage further by reporting on all of the other issues that the group considered in relation to enlargement.

4. The Enlargement Working Group met for the first time on Monday 8

October. The Group was invited to consider seven papers. WGE(01)1 provided an overview to the enlargement of the European Union and sought to disentangle some of the issues such as the Euro that have become intertwined with the enlargement process, but which are moving forward independently and within their own different time frames.

5. WGE(01)2 considered the United Kingdom and Assembly positions on enlargement and the wider benefits and challenges to Wales resulting from enlargement. It distilled the issues emerging from the "Engaging Wales" document and explored a number of options for taking forward or developing some

of the issues falling out of it.

6. Papers WGE(01)3 – 6 addressed the related but separate issues of the Euro, European Governance, Social and Economic Cohesion and CAP Reform respectively. WGE(01)7 set out a proposed programme of action falling out of the various papers.

7. A note of the main recommendations that came out of the meeting is at Annex A.

Compliance

8. Standing Order 15 covers the European Affairs Committee's activity. The working group was established on the basis of the Assembly's powers under section 40 of the Government of Wales Act. It is an informal advisory group whose main task will be to report to the European Affairs Committee. The Assembly Compliance Office has been previously consulted and is content with the compliance aspects.

Financial Implications

9. There are no additional financial implications for the Assembly arising from the issues covered in this report.

European and External Affairs

Annex A

Paper	Discussion	Recommendations
WGE(01)2	<p>Targeting appropriate regions</p> <p>It was agreed that a targeted approach to engagement with the central and eastern European countries (CEEC) was an appropriate way forward.</p> <p>In deciding which specific countries and regions to establish links with, a balance needed to be struck between the benefits to Wales, in the short and longer term, and the resource implications.</p> <p>It was recognised that a lot of activity was already taking place on a number of different levels and in different spheres and that while trade and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Priority should be to engage with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, with second tier activity directed towards Estonia and Slovenia. ii. The possibility of establishing greater political, trading and other links with the Silesia area of Poland should be explored through the First Minister's visit in December. iii. Officials should explore the options for establishing greater links with a second region from within the CEEC.

	<p>economic links were important, it was also important to develop cultural, educational and social links.</p> <p>On the question of political twinning, the group took the view that while there might be a natural affinity between Wales and regions that shared a similar industrial history (like Silesia), it should also consider developing links with a region that was developing ahead of the average in Europe.</p>	<p>iv. WTI should keep the level of activity in the CEE countries under review in light of the present budget round.</p>
	<p>A Marketing Strategy for Wales</p> <p>It was recognised that a good deal of work was already being undertaken to promote Wales internationally through the "Wales World Nation" initiative.</p> <p>While a fair amount was known about the commercial links that existed, there was a need to build up a similar picture of the cultural, educational and social links, some of which provided important sources of funding (such as that from overseas students).</p>	<p>i. Officials should undertake a review of the Cultural, educational and social links in Wales.</p> <p>ii. Officials should explore other ways</p> <p style="text-align: center;">in which Wales might be marketed.</p>
	<p>Identifying and promoting Welsh expertise</p> <p>The group concluded that there was a lot of activity already taking place but that it needed to be co-ordinated and more effort made to make the information more widely available so that the links and synergies that exist could be explored and developed further.</p>	<p>i. Officials bring together information on Welsh participation in networks, Welsh expertise and experience for wide circulation and publication on the Internet.</p> <p>ii. A representative from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, along with one or more of the participating Departments, should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Working Group to outline the implications and practicalities of</p>

		participating in the EU twinning programme
	<p>Increasing knowledge of and contacts in central and eastern European countries</p> <p>It was recognised that a lot was already happening, but that it was often un co-ordinated and fragmented. It was re-affirmed that the quality of the relationships that were established were important – where possible, these should be mutually beneficial and long term.</p>	<p>The Assembly and WEC consider a mechanism with partners to ensure a more co-ordinated approach and report back to a subsequent meeting.</p>
	<p>Sharing of Information</p> <p>The group noted the existence of numerous information networks across Wales and agreed they should be reviewed urgently.</p>	<p>Officials should bring forward specific proposals for improvements to the existing information networks system to the next meeting of the group.</p>
WGE(01)3	<p>Euro</p> <p>The group noted the work that is being undertaken in relation to public and private sector preparations in Wales</p>	<p>No specific recommendations</p>

<p>WGE(01)4</p>	<p>European Governance</p> <p>It was reported that the debate on Governance would be ongoing for the next couple of months. The Assembly and Welsh Local Government would be responding to the White Paper by March 2002.</p>	<p>The group should be invited to agree recommendations for a response to the Commission's White Paper on EU Governance in line with the Commission's timetable for responses.</p>
<p>WGE(01)5</p>	<p>Economic and Social Cohesion</p> <p>The group heard that in order to influence the Third Cohesion Report it would be necessary to respond to the Second Report by March 2002. The Assembly was currently considering participation in Commission workshops, to be held next Spring, but we are awaiting further details.</p>	<p>The group should be invited to agree recommendations for a response to the Commission's Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion</p>
<p>WGE(01)6</p>	<p>CAP Reform</p> <p>The group heard the latest position with regard to the mid-term review of the Agenda 2000 CAP reform The group noted that the Minister for Rural Affairs will put a paper to the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee on the approach to the mid-term review process in the New Year.</p>	<p>No specific recommendation</p>