

COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Date: Thursday 25 November 1999

Time: 9.30am

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

Title: European Commission Representation in Wales

The attached annex has been submitted by Catherine Eva, Head of the European Commission representation in Wales, for the information of Committee Members.

Committee Secretariat

ANNEX 1

EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATION IN WALES

1. The European Commission is the main administrative body of the European Union (EU). It has the role of initiating proposals for EU activities and legislation that are then decided upon by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It is also given responsibility for implementing key aspects of EU policy. Furthermore, the Commission is charged with monitoring the application of European law by Member States. Given these responsibilities, it is important that the Commission in Brussels is kept in touch with views and developments across the European Union. To help maintain those links, the European Commission has offices in each of the Member States - in Wales, official representation is through the Commission's office in Cardiff.

Role of the Representation in Wales

2. The European Commission's Representation in Wales has been in existence since 1976. It is primarily an office of representation acting on behalf of the European Commission in Brussels,

representing its interests and pursuing its communications policy. It is one of 23 representations across the EU located in capitals. In the UK there are offices in Belfast, Edinburgh and London.

3. The Representation is often the first point of contact for people wishing to know more about the European Union.

- **Reporting political, economic and social developments** to the Commissioners and their senior officials is a key role for the Representation.
- **Reporting and analysis** is provided on a daily basis to the Commissioners in Brussels and frequently involves direct meetings to ensure a clear understanding. Contact is maintained with political representatives, businesses, trade unions, farming and voluntary and community sectors and other multiplier organisations.
- **Media Relations.** The Representation acts as the voice of the European Commission within Wales. This involves speaking on the record on radio and television and with the press to accurately explain the policies of the EC and set out the Commission views on implications for the region.
- **Information and support.** The Commission has a decentralised information policy. The Representation co-ordinates these information outlets. The Wales Info Point Europe on Cathedral Road has a wide range of publications and is open to the general public for access and support.
- **Visits.** The Commission Representation co-ordinates visits to Wales of Commissioners and officials.

European Union Institutions

4. The main European institutions have a direct relationship with Wales through the members of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission Representation in Wales.

Implications of Devolution

5. With the transfer of powers to the National Assembly, the European Commission's Representation in Wales is working to put in place effective working relationships with elected members and officials. This presentation is part of that process.

6. In London, the Commission's Representation has established close relations with Whitehall and Westminster. This is the model for the Cardiff office to take for its relations with the

National Assembly for Wales. This is a two-way communication channel. On the one hand, we explain the role of the Commission and provide information on EU issues. On the other, we make sure that Brussels is thoroughly briefed on unfolding events in Wales.

9 November 1999

CATHERINE EVA

Head of Representation in Wales

European Commission