

SJR(2)-02-07(p.1) Annex B

Protocol for committee scrutiny and action on EU policy

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

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:

- 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.
- Inviting a Commission representative, UK government officials or MEPs for a direct exchange of views.
- 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).
- 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.
- 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:

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.

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.

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.

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.
- 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.

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.

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.