

EU ENLARGEMENT WORKING GROUP: DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Committee with draft Terms of Reference, an action point from the last meeting (23 May 2001).

Summary/Recommendations

2. The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the attached draft.

Background/Consideration/Timing

3. The main timing issue is for a group to be established in the near future in order that it can assist the Assembly in identifying and seizing the opportunities offered by the enlargement of the EU.

4. The Nice Conference last year agreed a "road map" for taking negotiations forward which makes possible the end of negotiations in 2002 and the front runners gaining accession in 2003. The Gothenburg Council earlier this month concluded that the enlargement process is irreversible and that those countries which are ready should participate in the European elections of 2004 as members. In respect of the Irish referendum, the Council confirmed the conclusions adopted by the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 11 June, including the willingness to contribute in every possible way to helping the Irish government find a way forward.

5. With the new UK government expected now to develop its response to the European Commission's Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion ("the Cohesion Report"), it is timely that part of the group's work should be to advise Ministers and the Committee on this. The Third Cohesion Report is expected to emerge in 2004. Other key dates are:

- 2002-03 Elections in France and Germany

- 2003-04 Change in European Commissioners
- 2004 IGC on the Charter of Competences
- 2005-06 Next UK elections; next EU "financial perspective" (future budget); negotiation of 2006-13 Structural Funds programmes

6. Cabinet Ministers' consideration of the implications of EU enlargement for Wales began some time ago. The Assembly's partners and other organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors have responded favourably to the proposed establishment of a group, which should aim to produce innovative suggestions rather than taking a "lowest common denominator" approach.

7. Membership of the group. It is essential that all 3 sectors should be invited to participate in the group, but equally important that the group is of a manageable size. The group will be chaired by the First Minister with the Economic Development Minister as his alternate. Its membership should include people with a sound knowledge of EU policy in Wales. A number of organisations were recently represented at official level at an informal discussion with Assembly officials: the chairs or chief executives of those organisations, together with cross-party representation of Assembly members, might form the membership of the group, which would thus be:

- First Minister (Chair)
- Economic Development Minister (Alternate Chair)
- Conservative Party AM
- Plaid Cymru AM
- Welsh Development Agency
- ELWa
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Higher Education Wales
- CBI
- Federation of Small Businesses

Compliance

8. Standing Order 15.2 requires the Committee on European Affairs to "monitor the general impact and consequences for Wales of policies being pursued by institutions of the EU...".

Cross Cutting Themes

9. It is implicit that the development of the Assembly Cabinet's position on EU enlargement must take account of its duties on equality of opportunity and sustainable development.

Action for the Committee

10. The Committee is invited to comment on the attached draft terms of reference, and to note that the enlargement working group will report to it at regular intervals. Through the First Minister, the group may also from time to time report to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Wales

in the World. The Economic Development Minister will occasionally report to the EDC on matters of interest to it. Similarly, other committees may be notified about matters of interest to them.

Contact Officials

Philip Bird, European and External Affairs Directorate, ext 3514, general enlargement policy

Jackie Brown, EEAD, ext 3157, future of the structural and cohesion funds/EU regional policy

Annex 1: Draft Terms of Reference

European Affairs Committee Working Group on EU Enlargement

A working group is to be established to advise the European Affairs Committee on Wales's response to the opportunities presented by the enlargement of the European Union.

Key tasks, which should be addressed as an early priority, are:

- steer the Assembly's strategy on EU enlargement, including the Assembly's position on the Wales European Centre paper "Engaging Wales", with the key aim of positioning Wales to maximise the advantages to it of EU enlargement.
- Provide a response to the target regions and countries among the membership candidates, outlined in the WEC strategy paper.
- Advise on Wales' response to the Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, with particular reference to the future of the structural funds.
- Provide a steer to the Wales input into the European Commission's work on EU governance, including the key issue of exploring with other devolved administrations how an effective regional-tier input can be achieved.
- Consider the existing links and potential for developing new ones, such as twinning, between Wales and regional-tier governments in the membership candidates.
- CAP reform.
- Analysis of non-devolved matters, eg single currency.
- Review arrangements for working with MEPs, Committee of the Regions members and partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to maximise the profile of Wales throughout the EU and the candidate states.

Membership

The group will be chaired by the First Minister and through him, the European Affairs Committee will receive regular reports on its activity. The First Minister may also report on the group's work to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Wales in the World.

The Minister for Economic Development will act as alternate chair, and may from time to time report to the Economic Development Committee where matters dealt with by the group are of relevance to EDC.

The group's membership is to include representatives of the four Assembly political parties and of the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The group's secretariat will be provided by the Assembly.

Procedures

The group should meet in a way that enables it to provide reports to the European Affairs Committee, including providing that Committee with regular briefings on the development of links between Wales and candidate countries. Copies of its reports should be made available to other committees as relevant and published on the Assembly's internet site. The group will agree at each meeting when it should next meet. Its meetings should be timed to enable it to advise the Committee in good time for the Committee to contribute to the debate on specific enlargement issues whether at the UK or EU level.