

COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Date	28 June 2001
Time	2.00pm
Venue	Committee Room 3
Title	MEPs Report

Purpose

At the last meeting of this committee (23 May) you decided to invite Wales' MEPs to contribute short notes as a standing item to each committee. Your aim was to use these reports to note their activities and insights on European issues to inform the thinking of this committee.

The notes have been drafted by the MEPs and have not been altered in any way. They appear below in alphabetical order. The Committee will note that Ms Eluned Morgan is on maternity leave.

Jill Evans MEP

- Went on a study visit to the former East Germany to assess the impact of unification ten years on and the lessons for enlargement of the EU. The programme of visits included a former coal mining area, an open-cast mining area and a new coal fired power station, as well as a declining rural area suffering from depopulation. The similarities between the continuing problems of poverty and high unemployment in these areas of Germany and parts of Wales were remarkable. A report of my visit will be in the South Wales Echo.
- Attended meetings with NGOs organised in Gothenburg during the summit of the European Council and spoke on the EU and climate change.
- Wrote an Opinion for the Women's Rights Committee on the Commission initiative on

'Accelerated action targeted at major communicable diseases within the context of poverty reduction' (HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB), which was adopted by the Committee in May.

- Spoke in the European Parliament on the European Commission initiative entitled 'Drinking of alcohol by children and adolescents', which aims to counter the alarming levels of alcohol abuse by children and adolescents. The Environment Committee adopted my amendments to the report.
- Met a representative of the European Commission to discuss the latest proposals for the labelling and trace-ability of GMOs and a possible further revision of the Directive on the Deliberate Release of GMOs.
- Spoke in the European Parliament on the importance of lifelong learning and the creating of a learning society during the debate on 'New technologies in tomorrow's education'.
- Took part in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee hearing on the revision of the Works Council Directive and information and consultation of employees. Following a proposal from myself, a representative of the unions at Port Talbot Steel Works attended and gave evidence.

Glenys Kinnock MEP

1. The appointment of Peter Hain as Minister for Europe, is an important opportunity for us, as we plan our all-Party Wales in Europe campaign on the Euro. As elected representatives in the Assembly and in the European Parliament there will be scope for those of us, who share a positive view about this issue, to work together.

2. I am following closely the progress on the Directive on Large Combustion Plants, which has the potential in its current form to endanger jobs in Aberthaw Power Station, where over 200 people are employed. A Conciliation Process is now underway, which will hopefully reach an agreement likely to offset the effect of an amendment which was agreed in the European Parliament at second reading. The amendment removed a derogation for existing plants, which had existed in the finely balanced EU Common Position. Without such a derogation 200 jobs on the site are put at risk, and the Directive would also have a direct and severe impact on Tower Colliery, which supplies the power station. It would in addition affect countless contractors' jobs in the area.

3. Cardiff City of Culture - it will be important to follow this and ensure that the bid is well targeted, and able to challenge strong bids from other parts of the UK. This is a project on which we could work together very effectively in the months ahead. The positive impact on, for instance Glasgow, in the past could be replicated by us in Wales.

4. We should follow discussions and deliberations on the Commission's Cohesion Policy, and

its potential impact on Wales. In addition we should clearly identify how Wales should respond to the Urban II Programme, which potentially represents a real opportunity for Wales.

5. The Directive on Information and Consultation - there was an acknowledgment of real progress in Council on June 11th. Britain has agreed in principle to binding EU rules on compulsory management/ employee consultation. The Directive will now be phased in, and includes in-built protections for smaller firms and a degree of flexibility. We will need to follow discussions in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the Parliament.

6. The Head of Economic Development on Ynys Môn County Council has enquired about State Aid rules for assistance to businesses affected by foot and Mouth. Ynys Môn, and presumably other local authorities, will be seeking permission to offer more than the current 50% ceiling for funding, and exemption from de minimis rules, for local business affected by the crisis. The UK (or Assembly) would need to apply to the Commission to obtain the status of 'a country in national crisis' in order to obtain permission. This would apparently be co-ordinated by the DTI but I understand that as yet no formal application has been made. I will naturally be following this issue but again it is something which could be taken up by the Committee.

7. I represented the European Parliament in the United Nations Least Developed Countries Conference held in Brussels in May. The Conference concentrated on trade, aid and development cooperation in relation to achieving the OECD poverty eradication targets. Key issues in the Parliament's Development Committee are the implementation of a programme of action on HIV/ AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In addition we are still following the implementation of the EU's Everything But Arms initiative which grants duty free access to all products, except arms, from the world's poorest countries. This is an example of an initiative which other donors should follow. The EU, as the world's biggest trading bloc, has acknowledged that we have a key role to play in achieving international targets on poverty eradication.

Eurig Wyn MEP

1. Rural Affairs and Agriculture

The Commission went ahead with the reform of the beef and veal market and we now are waiting Council's decisions as to whether they accept the suggested changes to the suckler premium. Our efforts to support keeping the premium as it is was were not successful. Although not all the farming unions are happy with the figures for the reform of the sheep and goat meat market – the Commission's suggested 21 euros and 28 euros for LFA areas is

better than we expected. Report has not been through the Committee as yet.

In general debate in the Committee now is very much revolving around changes to the CAP and the reforms required to tie in with healthy sustainable farming agenda instead of the intensive methods blamed for the crisis in the agriculture industry today. However although we fully support and accept the need for change we are mindful that this must be done in a way that is not detrimental to farmers and must be done gradually.

I have been invited to address a conference in Poland later this month June 29th and would welcome feed-back and possible in-put from the European Affairs Committee, Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Environment Committee. It will be vital to build contacts with the new entrant countries and Wales.

2. Culture, Youth, Media, Education and Sport

The White Paper on Youth will now go ahead after great concern that the Commission was going to withdraw the paper because of the problem of subsidiarity and youth issues generally speaking. However at an extraordinary meeting of the Culture Committee in Strasbourg at the June session the Culture Commissioner Viviane Reding reiterated her full support for the White Paper and confirmed that the Council also fully supported this initiative. When quizzed about the content of the paper Mrs Reding stated that she would do her utmost to ensure the paper would be a comprehensive paper that would address the concerns of the Youth of Europe basing it on the 450 proposals received from youth groups. It will be interesting to see if the Commission does actually touch on some issues which tread on the sacred ground of subsidiarity.

- 5 young people were invited over to take part in the youth Hearing in April – four of them had been part of Young Voice.
- Hosted a presentation in the European Parliament to launch the STORM project 2001

3. Media

The agenda for TV without frontiers directive is underway and will be following this closely over the next two years

4. Sport

Have been discussing the importance of sport in the context of social inclusion. The Belgian presidency will possibly be sympathetic to this agenda and will be pushing this agenda in the next 6 months.

5. Education

Have been working on an opinion on illiteracy and social inclusion and have been closely following the e-learning agenda.

European and External Affairs Directorate