

Senedd Cymru  
Y Pwyllgor Materion Allanol a  
Deddfwriaeth Ychwanegol  
Ymadael â'r Undeb Ewropeaidd:  
Paratoadau yng Nghymru ar gyfer  
diwedd y cyfnod pontio  
EAAL(5) EUP08  
Ymateb gan Cytûn - Eglwysi ynghyd  
yng Nghymru

Welsh Parliament  
External Affairs and Additional  
Legislation Committee  
Exiting the European Union:  
Preparedness in Wales for the end of  
the transition period  
Evidence from Cytûn - Churches  
together in Wales

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Cytûn (Churches together in Wales) represents the main Christian denominations in Wales, including Catholic, Anglican, Nonconformist, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Salvation Army and Quaker traditions, and a number of other Christian organisations in Wales. A full list of members can be found at:

<http://www.cytun.co.uk/hafan/en/who-we-are/> Between them, our 19 member churches have some 160,000 active adult members, and meaningful contact with many more children, young people and adults in every community across Wales.

None of our member churches had a stated opinion on the UK's continued membership of the European Union prior to the 2016 referendum. Following the referendum, they established under the auspices of Cytûn a Wales & Europe Working Party to develop a Welsh Christian response to the UK's departure from the EU and the forging of a new relationship, and this submission has been endorsed by that Working Party.

We have grouped our comments under the headings provided by the Committee.

#### 1. Welsh Government action to prepare Wales for the end of the transition period

- We acknowledge the difficulties faced by Welsh Government in carrying out this task while also tackling the Covid-19 epidemic, and in the light of frequent changes of UK Government policy.
- In the early phase of the Covid-19 epidemic, local churches were much involved in helping vulnerable people who found that they could not obtain essential supplies of food, toiletries and cleaning materials due to initial panic-buying. Such eventualities have been predicted should we leave the Single Market and Customs Union without a trade agreement. Whereas Welsh Government actions to mitigate such a scenario were prominent in March and October 2019, much less has been heard about such preparations for December 2020. Knowing the levels of anxiety that such a prospect will raise, especially amongst those who were badly affected by shortages in March-April 2020, we would urge Welsh Government to work with the UK Government to make appropriate contingency plans and to publicise them in order to reassure the public. As churches, we are involved in providing foodbanks, emergency shelter for the homeless and other services which might be needed in the context of a chaotic end to the

transition period. We are concerned that dealing with the Covid-19 crisis, and dealing with the complexity of regulations around re-opening worship and community services this autumn, has left resources of finance, energy and expertise amongst local church communities seriously depleted, and that extra support (logistical as much as financial) may be required if we are to support our communities in this way again in January 2021.

- We have been in regular contact with the churches in Ireland (Republic and Northern Ireland), and we share their concerns regarding the peace process in their island and the danger of unintended negative effects on the reconciliation achieved in recent years between different religious and political traditions. We know that the Welsh Government has been undertaking work regarding the sea border between Ireland and Wales, but as with preparations in general we believe that the time is approaching when more public statements need to be made about how potential difficulties at the Welsh ports may be mitigated in the event of a chaotic end to the transition period, and how the port communities may be helped to cope with the potential economic fallout of such difficulties, especially as ports have been very badly hit by the Covid-19 epidemic this year.
- We have been glad to be involved in the Welsh Government convened Roundtables with the Home Office regarding the Settled Status scheme. The information derived from those meetings has been extremely helpful in briefing our member churches and encouraging participation in the scheme. We have also been briefed by CAB on the Welsh Government funded additional advice service, and wish to acknowledge the value added by Welsh Government adopting this approach.
- We have been pleased to help contribute to thinking around Wales after the transition period through the [Future Wellbeing of Wales](#) programme, funded by Welsh Government and co-ordinated by WCVA. This cross-sectoral programme has shown an innovative and valuable approach to tackling major crises together – not just Brexit, but also the climate crisis.

## 2. Preparedness of key economic sectors in Wales

Churches and faith groups do not primarily constitute an ‘economic sector’, but we do of course operate within the Welsh economy and contribute to it.

- We have been able to take some steps to prepare for the end of the transition period such as participating in a WCVA organised third sector visit to Brussels in February 2020, and encouraging our member churches to strengthen their involvement with pan-European organisations such as the Conference of European Churches, the Churches’ Commission on Migrants in Europe and the Diocese in Europe of the Church of England, none of which are dependent on EU membership.
- There are, however, areas where it has been difficult to achieve the level of preparedness which we would wish, such as the continued lack of clarity

regarding the new 'points-based' immigration system and how it will impact on visits by members and leaders of churches overseas, and the ability to recruit from overseas using 'minister of religion' (Tier 2), 'religious worker' (Tier 5) visas, students and overseas volunteers. The church is an essentially worldwide body and the maintenance of international links through such exchanges of talent, expertise and insight are essential to us. The extension of these visa requirements to the EU has caused a reduction in such worldwide exchanges, and we hope that post pandemic we will be able to resume such links in person as well as virtually.

3. the implications for preparedness arising from the negotiation of UK international agreements, including the UK-EU future relationship agreement (or agreements), other significant free trade agreements and the Continuity Negotiations and Coordination programme

- At its meeting on 24 August 2020, the Working Party was briefed on the UK Internal Market Bill, published on September 9. We are deeply concerned at the potential effects on the devolved settlement of this Bill in seeking to ensure mutual recognition and non-discrimination with regard to goods, services and professional qualifications, many of which relate to devolved areas of policy, without a concomitant commitment to principles such as subsidiarity and proportionality. While members of churches hold a variety of views on devolution and its proper extent, all our member churches have been clear that in implementing the result of the 2016 referendum on EU membership, the result of the 2011 referendum that "the Assembly will be able to make laws on all matters in the 20 subject areas it has powers for, without needing the UK Parliament's agreement" needs also to be respected. We are writing about these matters to members of the House of Lords who have connections with churches in Wales prior to the Lords' consideration of this Bill commencing on October 19.
- We are concerned also at the potential effects of international trade agreements on matters which are of great concern to many of our members, such as animal welfare, labour standards, environmental protections, and so on. Many of these areas also are currently devolved to Wales and churches have been actively involved in seeking improvements in these areas. We are concerned that the Trade Bill currently before the UK Parliament threatens devolved powers in these areas, and note with great concern the comments by the Legislation, Constitution and Justice Committee in their [report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum](#) for this Bill that the Welsh Government's support for the Bill is based on an "the overdependency on non-legislative commitments being sought through non-binding intergovernmental agreements" (para 86). We note that similar issues have arisen also with regard to the UK Fisheries Bill. This is an aspect of the end of the transition period for which Welsh Government alone can adequately prepare - civil society is not in a position to do so - and we trust that work in this area can be strengthened.

4. intra-UK intergovernmental agreements relating to the end of the transition period, including the common frameworks programme.

- See our comments on Qn 3. It appears that the Internal Market Bill overwrites many of the proposed common frameworks with legislative provision, and like the LCJ Committee we are concerned at “the overdependency on ... non-binding intergovernmental agreements”.