

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution
Committee

6 February 2024

Dear Huw,

Report of Inquiry into UK-EU governance

Thank you for your letter regarding Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee's Report on their inquiry into UK-EU governance. The report addresses important issues about the role of the Senedd and devolved nations in the structures that have emerged to manage UK-EU relations post-Brexit. Senedd Members from all parties have demonstrated their interest in engaging with these new structures and the Senedd Commission has supported this international and EU engagement work via our International Framework for the Sixth Senedd. The evidence presented in your report demonstrates the value of the work that Members have undertaken in this area.

The Commission's response to recommendations 18 and 20 is detailed in Annex 1.

I look forward to the debate on the Committee's report. If there is any further information your Committee would like to have, at this time or where the Commission can usefully provide information to inform an inquiry being undertaken, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Kind regards,



Elin Jones MS
Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



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Annex 1

Recommendation 18. The Senedd Commission and the Remuneration Board should continue to provide appropriate and sufficient support to Members of the Senedd and the Senedd Committees to enable them to directly engage with EU institutions and stakeholders in order to ensure that key issues of importance to Wales are raised directly in Brussels.

European Engagement supported by the Senedd Commission

Support for the Senedd's EU engagement work and activity sits within the Commission's International Framework for the Sixth Senedd. The purpose of the framework is to provide accountability, clarity and direction to the international parliamentary activity resourced by the Senedd Commission.

The framework recognises the significance for the Senedd of engaging directly on the international stage. It reflects the view expressed by the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee of the Fifth Senedd looking ahead to the needs of the Sixth Senedd that:

"Being a respected international actor is an important part of being a national legislature, contributing to and benefiting from knowledge exchanges, finding allies and enhancing the influence that the Senedd can have through scrutiny and representation."

The Framework aims to assist in identifying opportunities to exchange knowledge and collaborate on an inter-institutional basis in the interests of the people of Wales. It recognises the value and importance of building the institutional and international reputation of the Senedd through engagement and collaboration, whether it be Member or committee led.

To this end, the Commission has continued to maintain a presence in Wales House in Brussels. Our presence is used to facilitate Member engagement with the EU institutions and to promote the important and high-quality work of Senedd committees and Members on relevant policy areas. It also facilitates evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement by Senedd committees as part of their work.

The Commission continues to support the work of Senedd committees and Members in the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly and have supported their calls for Senedd Members to play as full a role as possible in the body.

We continue to provide Commission staff and financial support for Members of the Senedd to engage in the Committee of the Regions-UK Contact Group including being the first UK institution to host a meeting of the Group in March 2022.

Resource to support Members and committees in these activities will continue to be provided during the Sixth Senedd and, recognising that this is demand-led, will be kept under review. The Commission's intention in the next financial year (2024-25) is to protect the funding levels provided to support Members' International and EU engagement.

The main sources of funding provided by the Commission to support engagement with EU institutions are the committees' travel and subsistence budget, and funding and resources used to support the Senedd's ongoing presence in Wales House, Brussels. This funded two major visits to Brussels in September (by the LJC Committee) and November (by the Economy, Trade and Rural



Affairs Committee) with significant support provided by officials.

Whilst the committee budget, in common with others held by the Commission, was affected this year by the Commission's decision to fund a cost-of-living payment for staff from in-year savings, efforts were made to ensure that all planned committee activity was funded.

There have since been two discussions at the Chairs' Forum on resourcing committee activity of this type, through which the views of Committee Chairs have been clearly articulated. These views have been taken into account in developing the Commission budget for 2024-25.

Independent Remuneration Board provision in relation to travel

The Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd is responsible for ensuring Members of the Senedd have the appropriate remuneration and resources available to them to undertake their role. This includes making provision in relation to travel, which is set out in the Board's Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances. The Senedd Commission is responsible for administering the Determination.

The Determination makes separate provisions for international travel by individual Members where the proposed visit meets the identified criteria set by the Remuneration Board.

Before travelling, Members must send a business case to the Members' Business Support Team for approval explaining the rationale for the visit, the number of overnight stays, and how the visit would meet the requirement to be necessarily undertaken to enable the performance of the Member's duties.

Although the Commission must consider each application on its own merits, travel to Brussels, or elsewhere, which enables Members to engage with EU institutions and stakeholders in order to ensure that key issues of importance to Wales are raised, would be anticipated to be within the scope of the international travel provisions set by the Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd.

The Commission recognises that the provisions for EU travel set by the Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd have changed since the UK left the EU. Although EU travel was expressly, and separately, provided for under previous Determinations, the current framework set by the Remuneration Board enables Members to undertake EU travel, without numerical 'caps'.

During this Senedd term, 13 international visits by Members have been funded under the Determination, of which 9 were to EU Member states, including one to Brussels.

Recommendation 20. The Senedd Commission should facilitate regular engagement with civil society organisations in Wales on UK-EU issues. For example, in respect of regular meetings involving Members of the Senedd on relevant external networks, UK-EU bodies, relevant Committee Chairs and civil society organisations engaged in work on these issues.

The Senedd Commission, through its support for the Members appointed to key UK-EU bodies, has sought to facilitate Member engagement with civil society organisation in Wales on these topics.

For example, as you will be aware, Senedd Commission officials supported Members attending the



last meeting of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA) to work with the Wales Civil Society Forum on Brexit to identify key areas of interest to Welsh organisations ahead of the last meeting of the PPA. The Senedd Commission has also facilitated Senedd Member and committee engagement with the European Union's civil society organisation, the European Economic and Society Committee, hosting two visits from the EESC to the Senedd in the last 18 months.

The work of your Committee and that of other relevant Senedd committees also undoubtedly plays a key role in providing opportunities for civil society organisations in Wales to raise issues of importance to them on this subject.

Senedd Commission officials are happy to explore this recommendation further with the Committee, other relevant Committee Chairs and Senedd Members with relevant roles to understand what additional facilitation of engagement might be possible and beneficial. Account would need to be taken of the resource implications of any additional activities as part of the Commission's business and budget planning and in light of other commitments in the International Framework and European engagement budgets.

