



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Cross Party Group on Women

Diversity and gender quotas in Wales

Sponsored by Siân Gwenllïan MS

17 September 2021

Zoom, 11:30 – 12:30

Attendees:

Sian Gwenllïan MS (Chair)
Jenny Rathbone MS (Speaker)
Jane Dodds MS
Peter Fox MS
Laura Jones MS
Sioned Williams MS
Laura McAllister, Cardiff University
Jackie Jones, Women in Europe (Wales)
(Speaker)
Patience Bentu, Diverse5050
Bessie Johnson, Bawso
Cerys Furlong, Chwarae Teg
Rebecca Rickard, Chwarae Teg
Tomos Evans, Chwarae Teg
Ele Hicks, Diverse Cymru
Jess Blair, ERS Cymru
Rhianydd Williams, TUC
Abi Thomas, Plaid Cymru (Carms and Pembs
Constituency)
Alison Parken, Cardiff Business School
Jen Ramsay, Office of Paul Davies MS
Debbie Shaffer, FTWW
Jordan Brewer, Welsh Women's Aid
Rosanna Johnston, EHRC
Leena Farhat
Kirsty Rees
Yasmin Begum
Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales
Megan Evans, WEN Wales
Evelyn James, WEN Wales (Speaker)
Jessica Laimann, WEN Wales (Speaker)

Apologies:

Delyth Jewell MS
Sarah Murphy MS
Joyce Watson MS
Carolyn Thomas MS
Llyr Gruffydd MS
Sarah Childs, University of London
Natasha Davies, Chwarae Teg
Victoria Winckler (Bevan
Foundation)
Iestyn Wyn, Stonewall Cymru
Melissa Wood (EHRC)

1	Welcomes, Apologies, Introduction – Chair
2	<p>The case for diversity and gender quotas in Wales – Jessica Laimann and Evelyn James (WEN Wales)</p> <p>Jessica and Evelyn presented international evidence supporting the effectiveness of gender quotas. Data showed that quotas were the single most effective tool for ‘fast tracking’ women’s representation in elected bodies for government. They were already used by 100 countries worldwide including many EU27 countries.</p> <p>Data on the effectiveness of quotas in other countries, and the experiences from Ireland discussed at a previous CPG meeting, showed that quotas were most effective when combined with other measures to tackle obstacles to diverse and equal representation. Importantly, there was an urgent need for further research into effectiveness and best practice for quotas for other protected characteristics. While a lot of work had been done on gender quotas, these would fail to deliver a Senedd that is representative of the society that it serves and therefore work on diversity quotas needed to be progressed as a matter of urgency as part of Stage 2 of the Electoral Reform.</p> <p>The presentation gave an overview of the current representation of women, people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and people openly identifying as LGBTQ+ in the Senedd. It noted that representation varied greatly between different political groups and was often dependent on initiatives of individual parties. Progress was therefore fragile, especially with regard to representation from the Black, Asian and minority ethnic population and LGBTQ+ communities, while data on other protected characteristics such as disability was lacking.</p> <p>The presentation called for Members from all parties to come together as the time to act was now. Quotas would go hand in hand with increasing the size of the Senedd and introducing STV, but timescales were critical. According to estimates by the Expert Panel on Electoral Reform, legislation would need to be in place by the end of 2022 in order to impact the 2026 elections. If this opportunity was missed, we would lose almost another decade to progress diverse and equal representation. The presentation concluded with calling on the Equality and Social Justice Committee to support the cause by conducting an inquiry into diversity quotas and legislative competence.</p>
3	Update from the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee – Jenny Rathbone MS

	<p>The Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee advised that the Committee's forward work plan had not been fully agreed. An inquiry into diversity and gender quotas could not be discounted at this point but was subject to agreement by the Committee. Jenny Rathbone MS argued that historically grassroots momentum had led to Welsh Labour's increase in women's representation while Plaid Cymru and the Conservatives had further work to do. She acknowledged that clarification was needed around diversity quotas. We needed to ensure that, as far as possible, the people of Wales were fully represented in the Senedd and that diversity was celebrated across all of Wales. Jenny Rathbone MS advised that she would share the proposal with the Equality and Social Justice Committee.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Discussion and questions from attendees</p> <p>Sian Gwenllian MS reiterated that statutory obligations on all political parties were required to ensure lasting and meaningful change in the Senedd.</p> <p>Laura Jones MS stated that the Welsh Conservatives would need to do better in terms of women's representation. There was a need to look into the factors holding women back as there was no lack of excellent women candidates in the party. It was important that perspectives of underrepresented groups were present in the Senedd and she was open to suggestions on how this could best be achieved. She also noted that the reduction of women's representation since 2003 had led to a regression in the Senedd with regard to policies such as family-friendly hours and childcare provisions. This emphasised that 50-50 representation may be needed to agree and maintain progressive policies.</p> <p>Peter Fox MS added that this was not a political matter and MSs from all party groups needed to champion diverse and equal representation within their own parties.</p> <p>Leena Farhat advised that we should consider an inquiry into structural racism to bring to the front all of the factors that consistently lead to an underrepresentation of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in public and political life. She further noted that more work was needed to ensure trans and non-binary people were supported and included in policy-making.</p> <p>Alison Parken advised that, in addition to using quotas within parties, we should consider legislative requirements that required parties to fulfill quotas before they could form a government, as for instance done in Spain.</p> <p>Jane Dodds MS stated that it would be interesting to hear more about evidence and experience around using all-women shortlists for Senedd elections.</p> <p>Laura McAllister advised that we could not afford to miss this opportunity to integrate quotas into electoral reform at this stage as it presented a rare opportunity for</p>

	<p>substantial change.</p> <p>Rhianydd Williams noted that, in order to successfully diversify a role, we need to also tackle the systemic racism and disadvantage that people would face in this role and ensure adequate support mechanisms were in place alongside quotas.</p> <p>Sioned Williams MS suggested that the Equality and Social Justice Committee could look at support mechanisms, such as job-sharing, inclusive working practices and the role of education.</p> <p>Catherine Fookes clarified that there were no gender quotas in place in Wales and there never had been. She argued that we cannot have gender quotas without diversity quotas as this would be letting down women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and other protected characteristics. While the Expert Panel and Senedd Committee on Electoral Reform had done a lot of work around gender quotas, more evidence on diversity quotas was urgently needed and the Equality and Social Justice Committee was in an excellent position to provide this through an inquiry.</p> <p>Jen Ramsay suggested that the CPG could make representations to the Senedd Commission to encourage them to support family-friendly policies like job-sharing. It was also important to consider diverse and equal representation of Senedd staff.</p> <p>Sian Gwenllian MS reiterated that it was essential to act now to promote diversity and gender quotas as part of the discussion around electoral reform.</p> <p>Evelyn James highlighted the need for people from all sectors and communities to come together in the fight for quotas as getting people from diverse communities into the Senedd was a unique opportunity to effect substantial change.</p> <p>Jackie Jones advised that it would be timely to get a legal opinion on quota legislation or to commission a legal expert to scope the legislation.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Update from the Women in Europe (Wales) Group – Jackie Jones</p> <p>Jackie Jones emphasised that a lot of work on gender equality and women’s rights was taking place in EU, the Council of Europe and the individual member states.</p> <p>In her State of the European Union speech, Ursula van der Leyen had announced a directive by the end of 2021 to combat gender-based violence and domestic abuse, which would make violence against women an EU level crime. Wales could consider how this approach compared to Welsh law and potentially align its own legislation.</p> <p>The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) provides a lot of relevant data sets and recently produced a toolkit on gender-sensitive communication which could be of</p>



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	<p>interest for MSs and third sector representatives.</p> <p>The Council of Europe has released a fact sheet on judgements relating to the rights of LGBTI people that all 47 member states (including the UK) were expected to follow.</p> <p>The CEDAW examination of the UK was taking place with WEN Wales feeding into the report for Wales. The CPG could also feed into these examination, for example through putting the proposal on diversity and gender quotas forward to the Government Equalities Office, which would provide another avenue to promote this agenda.</p> <p>Sima Sami Bahous of Jordan had been appointed the new director of UN Women. The organisation had recently release new documents, including Beyond COVID-19: A feminist plan for sustainability and social justice.</p>
6	AOB The Chair advised that the next meeting would be held on 22 October 2021 at 11:30.
7	<i>Close</i>