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Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

17 September 2013

David Melding AM
Chair of Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear David,

Committee of the Regions report on EU Public Employment Service draft legislation

I am writing to you in my capacity as the National Assembly for Wales' representative on the Committee of the Regions to draw to the attention of the Constitutional and Legislative Assembly Committee the work I am currently undertaking for the Committee of the Regions.

At the beginning of July I was nominated by the Economic and Social Affairs (ECOS) Commission as rapporteur to prepare the Committee of the Regions opinion on draft legislative proposals published by the European Commission in June that aim to strengthen and formalise cooperation between European Public Employment Services (PES). Such co-operation, which has been ongoing for over a decade, is very much focused on improving performance in the services provided to job seekers and employers, aimed ultimately at increasing employment.

My draft report (copy attached) goes through a two-stage formal adoption process:

- 2 October: the 'committee' stage – meeting of the ECOS Commission
- 28-29 November: full Committee of the Regions plenary

The report was prepared on the basis of evidence gathering in Brussels, Wales and London over the summer, with the support of my expert Nia Lewis from the Welsh Government's office in Brussels. It was clear from this work that the co-operation between European PES has been a very positive development at EU level, providing an excellent opportunity for mutual learning and sharing of best practice. I very much welcome the proposals to give a stronger formal basis to this co-operation, through the proposed 'Decision', and my draft report proposes two amendments which I think strengthen the proposals.

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Within the UK employment services continue to be a reserved matter, meaning that the Department for Work and Pensions participates in the European PES co-operation on behalf of the UK as a whole. However, there is scope within this arrangement for the devolved administrations to share their experiences with other countries, and my report seeks to encourage a stronger engagement with sub-State employment services and governments by the European PES framework, including requesting direct participation of the Committee of the Regions in the PES network. I have emphasised in particular the importance of focusing on sharing of good practice in combatting youth unemployment as a priority area for this network.

As regards subsidiarity issues, through our evidence gathering the only concerns that we have seen expressed have come from Italy – the Emilia Romagna region – and I am conscious that the Committee is aware of these through the access you gain to such shared information through participation of the Assembly in the Committee of the Regions Subsidiarity Monitoring Network. Italy is one of the rare examples in the EU where employment services are devolved to the regional level, and the response by Emilia Romagna reflects this.

If in your reflections on my draft report the Committee identifies issues that it would like raised, I would be very happy to take this into consideration in the context of amendments before the draft goes to the Committee of the Regions plenary session. I would ideally need to receive these by the end of October in order to make this possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mick Antoniw', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Mick Antoniw
Assembly Member for Pontypridd

CC. Gareth Williams, Clerk of Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee