

**Y Pwyllgor Materion Cyfansoddiadol a Deddfwriaethol
Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee**

Minister for European Affairs Sandro Gozi
Italian Presidency of the EU
c/o Italian Permanent Representation to the EU
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Cynulliad
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National
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Dear Minister Gozi

As Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee at the National Assembly for Wales it is a pleasure to write to you and share some observations which we trust will be considered constructive and valuable as part of the ongoing debate on improving EU governance launched under the Italian Presidency of the EU.

We place a high level of importance in the National Assembly for Wales on positive engagement in the EU policy and legislative process. We undertook an inquiry into Wales' role in EU decision-making during 2013-2014 and I attach a copy of our report for your information. It drew mainly positive conclusions about the way in which Wales engages with the EU decision-making process, whilst also recognising some of the challenges we face as a sub-Member State entity.

Therefore, we very much welcome your initiative to launch a debate on how the EU can most effectively engage with citizens to address the rise of euroscepticism and concerns over democratic deficit. These discussions are also timely given the internal discussions within the UK and Wales about the future of devolution, which has taken on an increased momentum following the recent Scottish Referendum.

One clearly important aspect of these discussions is how to engage effectively with parliaments and legislative assemblies across the EU, as the democratically elected bodies representing citizens. However, in the discussions we have observed, what is notable from our perspective is the

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focus on national parliaments and the lack of references to, or consideration of, the role of sub-Member State parliaments and legislatures. This is not unique to the EU level. We highlighted similar concerns in our response to the UK Government's consultation on Subsidiarity and Proportionality (part of its ongoing Balance of Competences Review of EU/UK competences) earlier this year, and in particular, the lack of any recognition in the explanatory note to the consultation of the role of UK devolved legislatures in the EU's early warning system for subsidiarity.

We consider this approach to be a missed opportunity and we would like to see the EU give more formal recognition to the role of sub-Member State parliaments and legislatures in EU policy and law-making and in engaging with citizens. I know this view is supported by the Committee of the Regions and shared by my colleagues in other parts of the UK, as well as CALRE (of which we are one of the founding members), which adopted the Galicia Declaration that highlighted this issue at its General Assembly in Santiago de Compostela on 8 November. The declaration can be viewed at: <http://www.calre.net.eu/index.php/what-is-calre/plenary-assembly-2014>

Sub-Member State parliaments and legislatures (in varying degrees) have key responsibilities in transposing EU legislation, in monitoring and scrutinising the compliance by their governments with EU obligations in those areas where it has competence. In Wales, the Assembly plays a key role in engaging the people of Wales in EU policy and law-making. This includes drawing attention to and explaining the relevance of EU policy/legislative developments, as well as acting as forum where Welsh stakeholders can debate and share their views/concerns, which we feed into the EU policy cycle through the Welsh MEPs and other MEPs in a 'legislature to legislature' dialogue, as well as communicating directly with the European Commission, Committee of the Regions and other Brussels-based bodies. We also have responsibility for overseeing the transposition of relevant EU legislation in Wales, and scrutinising compliance by the Welsh Government in implementing EU legislation, which includes most EU environmental legislation, agriculture (including CAP), animal welfare, education, health, culture, as well as overseeing the management and implementation of EU Structural and Investment Funds in Wales.

One real and practical way in which our role could be given stronger recognition, would be to involve politicians from sub-Member State parliaments in discussions in Brussels on these questions of governance. This includes participation in hearings in the European Parliament, in working groups organised by Council, in conferences and other fora where these issues are debated. We would be keen to be involved in such initiatives, and I have spoken at a number of EU conferences over the past year (including conferences organised by the Committee of the Regions, an institution with which we have excellent working relationships) about our work in Wales and more broadly on the role that sub-Member State parliaments can play in the EU decision-making processes.

I am also writing to the First Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans and to the Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee in the European Parliament Professor Danuta Hübner to draw their attention to these issues.

Yours sincerely

David Melding AM
Chair

cc His Excellency Stefano Sannino, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Italy to the EU