

Rt Hon David Lidington MP
Minister of State for Europe
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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10 March 2016

Dear Mr Lidington

UK Government's EU Reform Agenda

Thank you for your letter dated 26 January.

As part of our examination of the UK Government's EU Reform Agenda, we met with a number of EU officials and politicians in Brussels, and had discussions with the House of Lords EU Committee. We have also explored the issues with the First Minister. Our work built on our earlier inquiry into 'Wales' role in the EU decision making process'.

On a day to day basis decisions taken at the EU level can and do have a direct impact on and relevance to the competences of the National Assembly for Wales. We reflect this reality through the work of our Committees, with EU affairs having a high profile on this Committee and our specialist policy/legislative Committees. We also work closely with the other UK and Devolved legislatures, through the EC-UK forum, a twice yearly informal meeting of the chairs of the European and equivalent committees (including Sir William Cash and Lord Boswell from the UK Parliament.

We were therefore disappointed at the lack of consultation or engagement with the devolved legislatures during the negotiations on the reform agenda. There would have been clear benefits, for example, to a structured discussion on the sovereignty basket: the call for stronger powers for national parliaments in the EU



decision-making process. The role of devolved legislatures in EU scrutiny is important and it is unfortunate that the voice of the devolved legislatures in the process of raising a so-called 'red card' has not been considered. The outcome agreed in the New Settlement for the UK raises the possibility of a UK Parliament, acting exclusively on English competences (for example in the fields of agriculture or environment) calling for a veto on European Commission proposals, without being required to take account of or reflect the interest or concerns of the UK's Devolved Legislatures on such matters.

This is an issue that perhaps can be addressed through internal discussions in the UK, and we would hope this would be regarded as a priority should the result of the referendum mean the New Settlement for the UK would come into effect. In the meantime, it would be useful to hear your observations on this specific point.

Should the referendum lead to a UK exit from the EU, this will have major implications to all the devolved administrations and legislatures, including the National Assembly for Wales. It is important, therefore, that effective mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the devolved legislatures, as well as devolved governments, are integrally involved in the negotiations to define the terms of the UK's cessation from the EU. We would very much welcome your reassurances on this point.

We are committed to seeking opportunities to engage and influence on all matters relating to the EU. In that spirit, whatever happens following the referendum this summer, we hope the UK Government will look to give evidence to our successor committee early in the Fifth Assembly on our emerging relationship with the EU.

Yours sincerely,



David Melding AM

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

