



Elin Jones AC, Llywydd

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Elin Jones AM, Presiding Officer

National Assembly for Wales

David Rees AM
Chair
External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

8 January 2019

Dear David

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your Committee's inquiry into *Wales' future relationship with Europe and the World*. It is an inquiry I very much welcome. The terms of reference of your inquiry state the wish to explore the National Assembly for Wales's own relationships with European networks and institutions and make recommendations on how these can be taken forward after Brexit.

The principle network to which this applies is the [Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies - CALRE](#). CALRE is a network in which our Parliament has participated at various levels since the Third Assembly. Since becoming Llywydd, I have participated in the 2016 Plenary hosted by the Lombardy (Italy) parliament and more recently in a Working Group on Language and Cultural Diversity, in Valencia. I consider CALRE to be a valuable network which has presented the opportunity for us to discuss and exchange policy and best parliamentary practice with a range of European legislatures. CALRE has provided opportunities to develop relationships both at parliamentary and personal levels.

Our future relations with CALRE

I was, regrettably, unable to attend the recent CALRE Plenary meeting, hosted by the Azores Parliament in Horta. I did however ask that a statement be communicated to the Plenary audience of fellow European Speakers. That statement is self-explanatory and is attached in **Annex A**. I am pleased to report that initial feedback on this statement indicated that CALRE Members are in

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

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1NA

Llywydd@cynulliad.cymru

www.cynulliad.cymru

0300 200 7403

National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA

Llywydd@assembly.wales

www.assembly.wales

0300 200 7403



Elin Jones AC, Llywydd

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Elin Jones AM, Presiding Officer

National Assembly for Wales

principle content, and indeed enthusiastic, to facilitate our continued participation in its work post-Brexit; with the exact details of the practicalities of this to be determined following March 2019. A subsequent document “**Reflection about the future of CALRE**” issued following the plenary confirmed this aspiration for continued cooperation and the relevant excerpt is attached in **Annex B**.

As you will be aware, our other participation in EU specific networks is through the **Committee of the Regions** (CoR) in which we are currently represented by Mick Antoniw AM, along with Bethan Sayed AM as the alternate member.

We will continue to participate in this, as well as the *Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe*, on which Vikki Howells AM sits, until our exit from the EU.

I do not expect our engagement with the other international network in which we participate, namely the *Commonwealth Parliamentary Association* (CPA) and the *British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly* (BIPA), to be directly affected by Brexit; though they may take on an increased significance for our Members, in light of any restrictions which impede our participation in engagement dependent on EU membership.

I should add that whilst your inquiry looks specifically at European networks and institutions, our Framework for International Engagement specifies that we will, in light of the EU referendum result, pursue proactive bilateral relations with other European parliaments. This is something I am keen to take forward as the figurehead of our Parliament.

I hope that this is helpful and of interest to the work of your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Elin Jones AM
Llywydd



Elin Jones AC, Llywydd

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Elin Jones AM, Presiding Officer

National Assembly for Wales

ANNEX A

Dear President Ana Luís and fellow CALRE Members

May I firstly extend my warmest greetings to you all from the Welsh Parliament and apologies that I am unable to be with you in person at, what I am sure, is a very special Plenary meeting in the Azores. Can I also put on record my thanks and congratulations to President Ana Luis for her successful chairing of this year's CALRE Presidency.

The United Kingdom is leaving the European Union but we are not leaving Europe.

We in Wales very much value the friendship of our European neighbours and recognise the value of our continued cooperation as parliaments, to impart and exchange best practice between our democracies. I saw this, first hand, when I had the pleasure of attending the 2016 Plenary in Lombardy and, more recently, when I participated in CALRE's Working Group on Language and Cultural Diversity, hosted by the Valencian Parliament.

It is a priority for the National Assembly for Wales to enable a strong institutional response to constitutional change, including the outcome of the EU referendum. We will strive to do this through strengthening inter-parliamentary relations. Our parliamentary committees are actively examining these important matters in great detail.

We as a parliament remain interested in the work of CALRE and wherever possible will gladly contribute to its work in whatever way we can, including sharing best practice and experiences to help inform this work. Whilst recognising that this will no longer be possible as full Members, the fact remains that as a Welsh Parliament, we will continue to be an open and outward facing institution, promoting Wales on the international stage and opening our doors to the world.

Should CALRE be minded to examine ways to formally recognise this offer of continued engagement, I, on behalf of the Welsh Parliament would be willing to examine alternative membership options or formalised relations, which could facilitate our continued relationship and participation in the work of CALRE.

With a heavy heart but in the hope that we will continue to maintain inter-parliamentary relations I, on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, thank you for the friendship and wish CALRE well in your future endeavours.

ELIN JONES AM, LLYWYDD
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES



Elin Jones AC, Llywydd

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Elin Jones AM, Presiding Officer

National Assembly for Wales

ANNEX B

Excerpt from “Presidency of CALRE 2018 “Reflection about the future of CALRE” paper

1.3 Members

The future of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland participation in CALRE, in the context of the exit of the United Kingdom off the European Union, is, naturally, a matter of special importance, and it should be found the better regulatory perspective and solution to keep its inclusion in CALRE.

The challenge to CALRE, in this context, is to guarantee the continuity of the presence and contribution of those members, assuming that CALRE would be clearly weakened in the case of the withdrawal of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, from a quantitative perspective, seeing the number of its members reduced and, in a significant way, the total populational weight of CALRE, and from a qualitative point of view, the lost of the contribution and proactivity of those members.

The members of CALRE welcome the stay of the United Kingdom regions after the Brexit as members of full right and through an exception to the rule that the members of CALRE should be from Member-States of the European Union, although they understand that the matter should be approached only after the exit of the United Kingdom and taking into account the content of its agreement, in the way that only then will be possible to have a clear and extensive view of the future relation, in general, of the United Kingdom with the EU and, particularly, in the scope of the regional and territorial cooperation.