

European and External Affairs Committee

Minutes

Date: 1 July 2004

Time: 9.00am

Venue: Committee Rooms 3&4, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

Members

Sandy Mewies (Chair)

Rosemary Butler

Christine Chapman

Rhodri Morgan

Mike German

Christine Gwyther

Rhodri Glyn Thomas

Ieuan Wyn Jones

Rosemary Butler

Jonathan Morgan

Constituency

Labour: Delyn

Labour: Newport West

Labour: Cynon Valley

Labour: Cardiff West

Liberal Democrat: South Wales East

Labour: Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire

Plaid Cymru: Carmarthen East & Dinefwr

Plaid Cymru: Ynys Mon

Labour: Newport West

Conservative: South West Central

Invitees

Peter Black AM

Chair, Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Standing Invitees

Eluned Morgan

MEP

Janet Royall

Head of the European Commission Office in Wales

Janet Davies AM

Committee of the Regions

Officials

Gary Davies

Head, European and External Affairs Division

Jackie Brown

European and External Affairs Division

Des Clifford

European and External Affairs Division, Brussels

Committee Service

Lara Date
Julie Owen

Committee Clerk
Deputy Committee Clerk

Item 1

Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest (9:00 - 9:10)

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Nick Bourne AM, and from standing invitees Jill Evans MEP, Jonathan Evans MEP, Glenys Kinnock MEP and Rose d'Sa.

1.3 No interests were declared under Standing Order 4.5.

Item 2

Minutes of previous meetings and matters arising (9:10 - 9:20)

Paper: EUR(2)-05-04(min) - Minutes of 27 May meeting

2.1 Members were content with the minutes of the previous meeting.

2.2 At the previous meeting it had been agreed that a letter be sent to the European Commission concerning the timely recruitment of a new head of the Commission's Office in Wales to replace Janet Royall. On the advice of the European Commission Office in Wales, a letter was sent to the Director General of DG Press and Communication and copied to Commission Vice President, Neil Kinnock. Neil Kinnock's response had been circulated to Members. Janet Royall informed Members that the post had been advertised internally with a closing date of the end of July.

2.3 A letter had been sent to the House of Commons Modernisation Committee concerning the European Scrutiny Committee's proposal for Assembly representation on a new European Grand Committee. The letter had been copied to the Business Committee, which was content with the Committee's response. A response was awaited from the Modernisation Committee, which had been involved in the publication of the results of a separate inquiry into 'Connecting Parliament with the Public'. The Committee's inquiry into scrutiny of EU matters was still ongoing.

2.4 Members had requested further information on budgetary figures for Wales under the UK Government's proposals to repatriate regional policy funding, and more information on the UK-China trade task force led by the Deputy Prime Minister. The information had been circulated.

2.5 The latest newsletter of the Scottish Parliament's Network of Regional Parliamentary European

Committees (NORPEC) had been circulated to Members, along with the criteria for membership, which would be decided by existing members. The Committee noted that the network welcomed expressions of interest in joining NORPEC, in advance of its next meeting in Edinburgh in November. Members were content for the Chair to write to the Convener of the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee, Richard Lochhead MSP, to express interest in being considered for future membership.

2.6 Dates were being circulated to the Chairs of the other European Committees in the UK for a meeting to be hosted in Cardiff in the autumn. Members would be informed of arrangements for the meeting in due course.

2.7 Members had been informed that the Committee of the Regions UK Delegation would be holding a meeting in Cardiff on 30 November. Members would receive an invitation to attend.

2.8 The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the Report on the 'Get the Vote Out' campaign for the European Elections.

2.9 Members had noted the information circulated on post-2006 regional policy funding proposals and the possible budgetary implications for Wales under the Barnett formula. It was explained that due to the changes in the EU Presidency and likely changes in portfolios the position regarding the financial perspective was unlikely to be settled before the autumn. However it was possible that the Commission would adopt the General Structural Funds Regulations in July. It was agreed that a report on that subject would be provided by the European and External Affairs division for circulation to members during recess.

Action points:

- The Chair would write to the Convener of the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee to express the Committee's interest in being considered for future membership.
- The Secretariat would inform Members of the date and arrangements for an autumn meeting with other European Committee Chairs as soon as they were finalised.
- A paper providing further information regarding negotiations on regional policy funding, the adoption of Structural Funds regulations and the implications for Wales would be made available to Members during summer recess.

Item 3

Minister's Report (9:10 - 9:40)

Papers:

EUR(2)-06-04(p01) - Minister's Report

3.1 The First Minister made the following oral updates to his written report:

- During his visit to Finland the First Minister had discussed efforts made over the past 30 years in Finland to reduce heart disease. Research indicated that 95% of the reduction could be attributed to changes in lifestyle - better diet, reduced smoking, etc. It had been found that the use of the term "health science" rather than health promotion appealed more to the general public. There were differences in opinion between men and women in the best dietary approach to reducing heart disease, but it was not easy to compare the Finnish policy on healthcare with that in Wales as their health campaign had been running much longer. It was noted that the overall downward trend in mortality had consisted of peaks and troughs and some years had seen an increase in mortality.
- Following a visit by the new Marshal of Silesia, Michael Dzarski, officials were investigating opportunities to strengthen and develop the relationship to the mutual benefit of both parties. WEFO Officials had been seconded to Poland and Latvia in order to assist those countries in setting up processes to administer Objective 1 monies.
- The First Minister had been unable to attend a meeting to discuss the Working Time Directive (WTD), but the Assembly had been represented by an official. Although the UK Government were not able to secure an opt out they had been successful in negotiating agreement that the Directive would be amended to the originally construed meaning. However this would not happen before August when the current WTD conditions relating to working hours would come into force. A committee of the British Medical Association had agreed that they would not stop working long hours but this would not preclude individuals taking legal action. Members discussed the wide range of people who might be affected by the directive, such as teachers on school visits who were constantly on call and those in the voluntary sector. It was expected that a third category would be introduced in addition to those on-call or not on-call, of those 'inactive on-call', for example a doctor could be on-call but not required to work. If a doctor was required to work during the period then those hours would be taken into account.
- The First Minister would be attending a meeting of European Ministers that afternoon.
- The First Minister felt that the people of Wales should be commended on their sense of citizenship as demonstrated by Wales having one of the best voter turnouts in the recent European elections. Britain used to have a low voter turnout but was now among the average across the EU.
- The UK would take over the European Union Presidency at the end of June 2005. Most meetings would be held in Brussels, however there would be a number of informal events that would be held in the UK. Wales would play host to a major European Youth event and was in the running for hosting several other events.
- The Minister was asked whether he could, on any future visits, look at what other countries were

doing in regard to early years development. Although the Minister had not specifically visited any early year's projects in Finland it had been discussed. The policy in Finland was not to begin formal education at too early an age. Between the ages of 3 and 7 children were taught through play, and at the age of 7 all learnt to read at the same time. The reading ability of 8 year olds was above that in the UK. Pupils did not sit examinations until they were 17-18 years old. Ninety Five per cent of the population went on to higher education, with many people not entering permanent employment until their late twenties.

- The standard of living in Finland was above that in Wales, however they had almost 9% unemployment mainly as a result of the break up of the Soviet Union when many guaranteed markets had disappeared. Finland experienced very low economic activity in rural areas and had a large refugee community, which could be disadvantaged in the jobs market as people had to speak Finnish in order to find work. There did however appear to be less stigma attached to people of any background being employed in low-skilled jobs. Finns had a relatively short working life as many did not start work until their late twenties and they retired at approximately 57. It was also noted that the Economic Development and Transport Committee were planning to visit Finland as part of their next review on science policy.
- Members asked the First Minister to consider what action he could take to encourage staff to undertake European secondments. The Minister was keen for staff to undertake secondments. There were currently six National Assembly staff on secondment to Brussels, with three staff (with a particular expertise) on longer term appointments. It had been found that secondments tended to appeal to younger staff. The benefit of encouraging staff from Wales to apply for jobs with the European Commission was recognised. However applicants needed to pass an examination and speak at least one other official language of the EU. It was noted that there was no longer an age barrier to entry for the 'Concord' examination. It was suggested that it might be a good idea to encourage colleges in Wales to train students to take these exams, however this would need more consideration before any action could be taken. The 'Fast Stream' had been the method by which a number of staff had entered the civil service and had experience of working in Europe. The Cabinet Office had undertaken a review of the scheme and EEAD offered to provide the Committee with a paper on the outcome of that review for a future meeting.

Action points:

- The Committee would receive a paper on the review of the Civil Service 'Fast Stream' recruitment process.

Item 4

Update on the draft European Constitution (9:46 - 10:00)

EUR(2)-06-04(p02) - Latest position on the draft European Constitution

4.1 The UK government had signed up to the European Constitutional treaty on 19 June. The Treaty had

included items that Wales had negotiated to have included. The main changes introduced by the Treaty include:

- A Permanent President and, from 2014, a reduction in the size of the Commission. Instead of each state having a Commissioner, the size of the Commission would equal two thirds of the number of member states
- The recognition of the role of regional government
- The Committee of the Regions had been given the right of recourse to the European Court of Justice to defend its prerogatives
- The areas in which Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) would apply was extended. A QM vote would require at least 55% of the member states and 65% of the EU's total population
- At the request of the Spanish Government an article had been inserted which allowed Member States to nominate languages, other than official languages, into which the treaty should be translated. It was hoped that Welsh would be nominated But this would be a matter for the UK Government to decide. Members asked for assurances that the First Minister would press for Welsh to be one of the nominated languages as this would greatly enhance the status of the language. It was noted that in the EU institutions the term 'lesser-used languages' was preferred to 'minority languages', and that the Charter of Fundamental Rights was the only part of the treaty where the status of lesser-used languages was referred to and it was not an area covered by QMV.

4.2 The Treaty would now need to be ratified by 25 Parliaments and 9 referendums.

4.3 It was confirmed that the reference in the treaty to a three yearly report on progress with Structural Funds programmes was a continuation of current practice, where funding was set over a six-year period and a progress report produced at the three year mark. It was noted that around eighty per cent of the treaty consisted of carrying forward existing practices.

4.4 The problem of educating the Welsh public as to the content and importance of the treaty was discussed. It was felt that the Welsh media had only been interested in expressing their support or dislike of the Treaty.

4.5 It would be the task of the UK Government to implement the Treaty but it would be necessary to set up mechanisms to ensure that the Assembly would be consulted on regional matters, whilst local authorities were consulted on municipal items. There was also discussion on how Assembly practices would need to be amended to meet the needs of the Treaty. It would be important for the Assembly to adapt its structure to get involved in the legislative process earlier. Although the Treaty gave National Parliaments the right to consult it did not compel them to do so. The work of the Irish Presidency to successfully obtain agreement on the Treaty was commended.

4.6 It was noted that when a referendum on the Constitution was held in the UK, the results for Wales should be published separately.

Item 5

Presentation by Education and Lifelong Learning committee Chair (10:00 - 10:20)

5.1 Peter Black, Chair of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee (ELL) attended the meeting to inform Members about how ELL considered European and external affairs issues as part of its work.

5.2 To date the European dimension of ELL's work had been limited. However, a protocol for monitoring EU deposited documents/legislation had been put in place.

5.3 The ELL Minister, Jane Davidson AM, used her Ministerial report to regularly update ELL on work in her portfolio with a European dimension. She was proactive in including information relating to education and training in Europe. Notably, ELL has received updates on Wales's involvement in the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning network (EARLALL).

5.4 In February 2004, the Minister had informed ELL of the launch of the European Year of Education through Sport. The programme aimed to bring education and sport together for the benefit of all young people and to encourage them to engage in learning. Events were planned throughout 2004.

5.5 ELL had received a substantial amount of information relating to the EARLALL General Assembly held in Brussels in March. The conference had been arranged to facilitate the sharing of good practice within the network and for its members to update each other of progress.

5.6 In June the Minister had announced £100,000 match funding for a Leonardo da Vinci mobility project which would enable 100 young people from across Wales to participate in a 15-week language and work experience programme. The European Centre for Training and Regional Co-operation (ECTARC), based in Llangollen, would be responsible for the training and administration.

5.7 The Minister had notified the Committee that Wales had been chosen to host the youth event celebrating the UK's Presidency of the European Union in the second half 2005.

5.8 ELL was nearing the end of the first phase of its policy review of Special Education Needs which had focussed on early identification and intervention. ELL had made visits to schools in North and South Wales but not outside Wales due to time constraints.

5.9 ELL would pursue the other phases of the SEN review in due course. It was intended that the focus would be on the statementing process and transition. It would consider undertaking fact-finding visits to parts of Europe for these aspects of the review. ELL would be receptive to any suggestions from Members of the European and External Affairs Committee on possible regions/countries, which

reflected the bilingual situation in Wales. ELL could also see some advantage in seeking advice from the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education itself, as to where suitable fact-finding visits could be made.

5.10 Concurrent with the SEN review, ELL were undertaking a review of school transport, with a strong focus on the safety of school buses. An expert adviser had been appointed and the Committee was minded to examine best practice in Wales, the UK, Europe and beyond. Again, suggestions as to areas suitable for fact-finding visits or suitable contacts from the Committee were welcomed

5.11 In accordance with agreed protocol across the Committees, ELL were provided with an updated schedule of EU deposited documents. A short explanatory memorandum accompanied each entry, however, it was felt that these memoranda included too much jargon and could be simplified. Members noted this point and the European and External Affairs Committee Chair would consider the issue of briefing on EU legislation further with Members' Research and Committee Services.

5.12 The current Committee timetable of three weekly meetings meant that it was almost impossible to look at any of the EU items in any great depth or detail. To factor this into the current timetable would more than likely incur additional meetings just to consider this business.

5.13 ELL were circulated with the European Commission's annual forward work programme and had noted its education and training elements; nothing had been flagged up for further consideration on the 2004 work programme.

5.14 The Committee recognised that Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies access large amounts of EU funding and scrutinised them routinely. Although, it was pointed out that matters relating to the use of EU funds were not at the forefront of their discussions. The Committee would be piloting 'rapporteur group' visits to organisations over the summer recess and would consider pursuing lines of questioning on the use of EU funding during those visits.

5.15 Visits undertaken by the Committee had been used primarily to gather information for the policy review on special education needs. ELL had not looked at how many schools had established links with those in Europe. Members stressed the importance of schools having links with those in Europe as a way of breaking down stereotypes and reducing racism. ELL could not direct local authorities to establish such links but it could suggest it.

5.16 The Working Time Directive (WTD) had been brought to the attention of the ELL Committee, however members had not asked that it be placed on the agenda. The likely implications for schools could be considered further by the Committee. Concerns were expressed that Members were focusing primarily on the negative aspects of the WTD and it should be borne in mind that it had been introduced in order to protect workers.

5.17 It was also suggested that the ELL Committee might wish to consider closer monitoring of the

engagement in Wales in the Socrates educational programme.

5.18 Peter Black believed it was ELL's role to help develop policy and scrutinise the role of the Minister, it was for the Minister to promote the learning of European languages. It was suggested that young people considered that learning a foreign language was "uncool" and that there should be a rethink of how languages were taught, focusing more on practical information useful when travelling to those countries. The ELL Committee Chair suggested that it could be considered as a possible future policy review either for ELL or even by the European and External Affairs Committee.

Action point:

- The Chair of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee would feed back the Committee's comments on European issues for consideration in the future ELL work programme.

Break 10:32 - 10:47

Item 6

Mid-year review of European Commission Work Programme (10:47 - 11:15)

Paper: EUR(2)-06-04(p03) - Mid-year review of European Commission Work Programme

6.1 In December the Committee had looked at the EU Work Programme for the following year. It had been agreed that the committee would review progress at the half-way point.

6.2 The entry of ten new members, elections, a new President and the planned changes to the Commission in November, meant that 2004 had been a year of change for the EU. As such the work programme had been much slimmer than usual. However the EU was generally on course to meet its targets, and this could be attributed to the work of President Prodi who had set up tighter alignment between the EU Parliament and the Council's ambitions.

6.3 Significant events during the period included:

- The Third Cohesion Report and Forum at which the First Minister had spoken.
- The effect of the WTD upon the NHS
- The General Assembly of the Atlantic Arc Commission, a sub group of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe had met in Bilbao in June at which Dr Ron Loveland, the Assembly's Chief Technology Officer had given a talk on innovation issues. The group were now looking at taking forward a number of joint projects
- REACH environmental proposals had been the biggest area for legislation for the EU.
- On the same day as the Cohesion Forum the First Minister, along with representatives from the

other devolved bodies in the UK, had met with President Prodi. Similar discussions were planned in other subject areas.

6.4 Comments on the programme included:

- Members were concerned that the draft Directive for Services in the Internal Market could have potentially damaging implications upon the services offered by the NHS. It was explained that the Directive was designed to create a single market for services, similar to that which had already been established for goods. It was agreed that the Committee would look at this further. The Head of the Assembly Office in Brussels would provide more information.
- Further information on the effect of a recent legal ruling that had been made regarding entitlement for medical treatment would be provided. The case referred to a patient who had been on a waiting list for treatment for over six months and was entitled to seek treatment elsewhere with the NHS meeting the cost. It was agreed that the Committee Clerk would liaise with the Head of the Brussels office and a note would be produced for circulation during recess.
- Further information on the new rules relating to "compensatory" measures that must be taken by firms in receipt of aid was requested.
- Members requested further information on the first annual report on gender equality prepared as part of the Lisbon process. The Committee Clerk offered to circulate the report that made recommendations on important gender equality issues that were being addressed in Wales.
- Information on Justice and Home Affairs had not been included in the report as the National Assembly did not have any powers in that area. However a note on the work being done in the area of reducing human trafficking would be circulated.
- Information was requested in order to compare figures for health indicators between Wales and Europe, as currently Wales was compared only with the rest of the UK.
- Figures on numbers of schools involved with the SOCRATES and Comenius programmes were requested.

6.5 Janet Royall outlined some of the subjects that would affect the EU in the coming months, these included

- The development of a drugs strategy
- Enlargement of the Union, with Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania due to join before 2008
- The debate on whether Turkey was ready to join the EU.

6.6 The Committee was also interested to receive a paper with more information on the UK Presidency of the European Union.

Action:

- The mid-year review of the Commission Work Programme paper would be circulated to Clerks and Chairs of Subject Committees.

- The Committee would be provided with a paper on the priorities for the UK Presidency.
- The Head of the Assembly Office in Brussels and the Committee Clerk would liaise to provide the Committee with further information relating to the following areas of the Commission's Work Programme: the draft directive on services in the internal market and the effect on health services; communications on raising standards of health care (para 14 of the paper); the 'compensatory measures' referred to in para 7 of the paper; the report on gender equality considered by the Equality of Opportunity Committee; the Justice and Home Affairs agenda of the Commission including work to combat human trafficking; accessing data on health indicators in Wales compared to the rest of Europe
- The Committee would be informed of whether Subject Committees had considered the draft directive on services in the internal market

Item 7

Scrutinising European Legislation (11:15 – 11:55)

EUR(2) 06-04(p4) - List of European legislation

EUR(2) 06-04(p5) - Green Paper on Public-Private Partnerships (COMM (2004) 327 final)

EUR(2) 06-04(p6) - White Paper on Services of General Economic Interest (COMM (2004) 374 final)

EUR(2) 06-04(p7) - Scrutinising EU Legislation: State Aid rules

7.1 The Chair informed members that at the Panel of Chairs meeting on 15 June she had put forward the Committee's views on the evaluation of the EU scrutiny system that was considered at the Committee's meeting on 29 April. The Panel had discussed Committees' differing experiences of EU legislative scrutiny and the usefulness of the briefing that was provided. It was agreed that Committee Chairs would send a report on the outcome of their committees' consideration of EU legislation to the Chair of the European and External Affairs Committee in the same way that Business Committee is informed of the outcome of scrutiny of secondary legislation. It was also noted that Members' Research and Committee Services would continue to develop the advice for Committees on EU scrutiny. The Panel had been informed that the Assembly Parliamentary Service would be advertising externally for a Policy Analyst to be based in Brussels, and that this would provide an additional resource for EU scrutiny.

7.2 Members expressed the view that even though the appointment was outside their remit, being a matter for the House Committee to decide, they would have preferred to have been consulted on the role of this new post, and the view was expressed that one person could not cover the amount of work involved. It was agreed that Members would be provided with more information about the rationale and job description of the post.

7.3 The Committee considered the lists of recently deposited EU documents. It was requested that two items on renewable energy deposited on 8 June should be drawn to the attention of the EDT and EPC committees and feedback requested on those Committee's consideration of the documents.

7.4 At the previous meeting, the Committee briefly discussed the Commission's Green Paper on Public-

Private Partnerships. It had been noted that there was a connection between this Green Paper and a Commission White Paper on services of general interest and that these could be scrutinised together.

7.5 The Chair informed Members that that these proposals would be considered in detail by the Local Government and Public Services Committee and the Economic Development and Transport Committee on 7 July. Members agreed that they would request feedback from the Chairs of the Subject Committees after 7 July.

7.6 The Committee had previously suggested that the Economic Development and Transport Committee (EDT) and the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee (EPC) meet jointly to discuss the Commission's tranche of environmental proposals, including the REACH proposals on chemicals. The Committees had met on 16 June.

7.7 Christine Gwyther, Chair of EDT, gave provisional feedback on the outcome of that meeting from the minutes, which had yet to be ratified by Members:

- Proposal for a Directive on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage (2002/0021/COD) - EDT Committee to look at the issue in more detail
- Proposal for a Directive concerning the quality of bathing water (2002/0254/COD) - Some way from adoption, further work on the technical elements of the Directive was expected by DEFRA. The cost of the Directive to the industrial sector had not yet been determined. It was agreed that EDT should keep in touch with progress and EPC would look at the Directive in detail in July
- Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 1999/32/EC as regards the sulphur content of marine fuels (2002/0259/COD) - given that the shipping industry had the potential to affect the Welsh tourism industry via pollution, this to be looked at in more detail when more information became available. However, the Irish Presidency was determined to obtain agreement by the end of June 2004
- Proposal for a Directive on the management of waste from the extractive industries (2003/0107/COD) - Officials said that the costs to business of the RIA were estimated at £2 million. The Committee agreed to consider this further when the RIA was available.
- Proposal for a Regulation on Shipments of Waste (2003/0139/COD) - Officials advised that this was unlikely to affect the levels of waste being shipped into the UK and that it would modify the regulatory framework The Committee agreed to consider this further at the appropriate time
- Proposal for a Directive relating to arsenic, cadmium, mercury, nickel and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in ambient air (2003/0164/COD) - Officials suggested Members might like to consider whether to look more carefully at the Directive once more technical detail was available
- Proposal for a Directive on the protection of groundwater against pollution (2003/0210/COD) - Farming in Wales was not as intensive as in England and therefore the levels of potential

pollution were less The Committee agreed to consider this further at the appropriate time.

- The REACH proposal (2002/ENV+/015), adopted by the Commission on 29 October 2003 - Members were concerned that the Directive was merely "gold plating" existing regulations. EPC to take the lead, EDT to keep a watching brief.
- Proposal for a Directive on environmental access to justice (2003/0246/COD) and for a Regulation on the application of Aarhus principles to the Community (2003/0242/COD) - The UK had already signed up to the Aarhus convention

7.8 EDT Committee had also met to discuss the Review on Regional Aid Guidelines. WAG officials had attended in order to help Members understand the issues. Concerns had been raised at the limited amount of time allowed to look at the subject, partly due to the purdah imposed prior to the June elections.

7.9 Members had stressed the need to ensure that assistance was delivered to those areas of Wales where need was greatest, however the UK favoured "pepper potting", identifying a number of small areas to receive aid. Further clarity was needed on some of the issues, and EDT intended to return to the matter in the autumn. Members felt that the issue should also be considered further by the European and External Affairs Committee in its forward work programme.

Action points:

- Members would be provided with more information about the rationale and job description of the new Assembly Parliamentary Service's post of policy analyst in Brussels.
- Two documents on renewable energy deposited on 8 June should be drawn to the attention of the EDT and EPC committees and feedback requested on those Committee's consideration of the documents.
- Feedback would be requested from EDT and LGPS Committees on their consideration of the documents on Public-Private Partnerships and Services of General Interest.
- The issue of regional aid guidelines would be considered further by the Committee in its forward work programme for the autumn.

Item 8

Committee Annual Report (11:38 - 11:41)

8.1 The Chair invited members to consider the Committee's draft annual report for 2003-04. The Committee agreed the report, which would be laid before the Assembly and a debate would be scheduled for the beginning of the autumn term.

8.2 The Chair expressed the view that although the Committee held a meeting in Brussels each year there had been limited opportunity to visit other areas of Europe and suggested that the Committee Clerk would consider the possibility of visits within the Committee budget for 2005-06, either for the whole committee or nominated members, which would be of interest to the Committee. It was also noted that

Assembly Members were entitled to two overseas visits per year from a centralised budget that was currently under-utilised.

Action points:

- The Committee's annual report would be laid before the Assembly and a debate scheduled for the autumn term.
- The Committee Clerk would review whether the Committee's budget for 2005-06 could accommodate European visits by Committee Members in addition to the annual meeting in Brussels.

Item 9

Update from Committee of the Regions members and MEPs (11:41 - 11.57)

EUR(2) 06-04(p9) - First Conference on Subsidiarity - organised by the Committee of the Regions under the auspices of the Bundesrat

9.1 Rosemary Butler AM and Janet Davies AM updated the Committee on the activities of the Committee of the Regions (COR):

9.2 The European elections had seen a good turnout in Wales, possibly due to the public being able to identify with the EU funding given to various projects in Wales. The expansion of the EU had seen the traditional French/German axis losing ground, and the atmosphere in the EU Parliament had changed as a result of enlargement too.

9.3 Rosemary Butler AM had attended the first conference on Subsidiarity, held at the Bundesrat in Berlin. It was agreed that subsidiarity would be considered further in the Autumn term and full discussion would take place then.

9.4 Rosemary Butler had also been appointed to a group set up to assist Bulgaria in preparing for entry to the EU.

9.5 At a meeting of the UK Delegation Co-ordination Group presentations had been received from the Royal Dutch Embassy on their plans for EU Presidency and from Dennis McShane, Minister for Europe.

9.6 Each political group on COR held regular meetings, and a meeting held by the socialist group had been attended, which had discussed the policy of cross border trade. It had been interesting to hear of the links between the old satellite states and the Soviet Union, where many people had simply ignored the borders in order to carry on trade. The discussion was of interest to Wales due to the cross border links with Ireland COR opinion papers on issues of interest to Members would continue to be circulated in the usual way by the COR Member.

9.7 Janet Davies AM was congratulated on being successful in having her proposed amendments,

relating to low cost airlines and their environmental impact and the Assembly's definition of sustainable development, accepted at a COR plenary meeting she had attended.

9.8 Janet Royall informed Members that the Latvian European Commissioner , Sandra Kalniete would be coming to Wales on 20-21 July to visit the Royal Welsh Show and EU funded projects in Wales.

9.9 The dates for the autumn term would be considered in plenary shortly and confirmed with Members and Standing Invitees as soon as possible.

Action points:

- The handling of subsidiarity issues by the Assembly would be considered in more detail in the autumn term.
- Dates for meetings in the autumn term would be circulated to Members and Standing Invitees as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 11.57.