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European and External Affairs Committee

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Date 28th February 2007

Venue Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Title The Commission's legislative and work programme for 2007

Purpose

To indicate the likely priority areas for the Welsh Assembly Government arising from the European Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2007.

Background

The Commission's strategic objectives are prosperity, solidarity, security and a strong voice in the world. In 2007 the European Union will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. It will also be a crucial year for the search for a new institutional settlement. The Work Programme continues to become slimmer and more focussed on strategic initiatives.

This paper examines the Work Programme in respect of the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda and suggests elements that are most likely to be of interest. It largely ignores proposals in areas not covered by the Assembly's devolved powers, although this obviously does not mean that such proposals aren't important. A caveat is entered to emphasise that priorities may shift and that this analysis is based on incomplete information; certain proposals may seem more, and others less, important when fuller information is available.

Consideration

1. Energy

- Energy has risen up the EU agenda amid concerns about long term security of supplies and negative environmental impact. The Assembly Government will take account of the wider picture and has particular interest in alternative technologies.
- Strategic Review of the Energy Policy for Europe: will establish key elements of energy policy for Europe encompassing sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply. It will facilitate consistency and a single voice on the international stage.
- Measures to ensure the completion of the internal market for electricity and gas
- Strategic Energy Technology Plan: to help development of promising energy technologies and bring them to the market.

- Proposal for a Directive Regulating Carbon Capture and Geological Storage.

Legislative proposal

- Carbon capture and storage (CCS) is a new technology that could make a significant contribution to the reduction of CO₂ emissions, both in the EU and globally. The body of environmental law will require adaptation to this technology, to remove barriers via a legal framework for CCS in the EU, to ensure legal certainty for investors across Europe, and manage new environmental risks.
- White Paper: "Towards a European Climate Change Adaptation Programme"

Non-legislative

- This will take into consideration responses from the consultation of the Green Paper on Adaptation and listing specific actions on adaptation to be undertaken by the Commission.
- Proposal for a Regulation relating to motor vehicles using liquid or compressed gaseous hydrogen

Legislative

This Regulation lays down the requirements for the type approval of hydrogen systems and hydrogen components for motor vehicles of categories M and N. It also includes requirements for the installation of specific components or systems in those vehicles. The main objective is to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market for hydrogen-powered motor vehicles while providing for a high level of public safety and a high level of environmental protection.

2. Information society

- New legislative proposals amending the regulatory framework for electronic communications: deals with expected market and technological changes in communications networks and services.
- Green Paper on Universal Service in Electronic Communications: public debate on concept of universal service (may lead to legislative proposals in 2008).

3. Research, Development, Innovation

- Communication on the European Research Area: will look at successes, failures, and new ideas, and will propose new actions.
- Communication on the Mid Term review of the Life Sciences and Biotechnology Strategy: will be supported by a study on the challenges, consequences and opportunities of biotechnology produced by the Joint Research Council in April ("Bio4EU study").

4. Education

- Erasmus Mundus: to establish successor to current Erasmus Mundus programme encouraging

H.E. institutions to establish joint masters programmes; also provides mobility scholarships for students/ academics from third countries to study or work in the EU and vice-versa.

- European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training: Proposal for European system designed to ensure that credits achieved in one Member State are fully recognised in another.

5. Culture

Communication on culture : Communication on future co-operation on cultural policy focussing on economy of culture, intercultural dialogue, digitisation of cultural heritage and on how arts and culture can help to connect the citizens and the EU.

6. Social Policy

- 4th Report on Economic Social Cohesion: progress towards economic and social cohesion, assessing contributions of EU and national policies;
- Communication on Strategy for Social Services of General Interest: next steps to develop more systematic application of Community law and principles in social services.
- Mid term review of European Social Agenda: assessing progress vis-à-vis the Union's social, jobs and equal opportunities agenda, on basis of which Commission will propose new EU agenda for access and solidarity.
- Europe's social reality: The review on the social agenda will be accompanied by a more wide-ranging report on social changes in the light of globalisation, called for by EU leaders in June 2006.
- Follow-up to the White Paper on a European Communication Policy: practical steps to be taken by the by EU institutions, Member States and civil society to connect to citizens and consolidate the democratic foundations of the Union.

7. Environment

- Review of existing legislation on industrial emissions: review current emissions regulation (e. g. through Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive; Large Combustion Plants Directive; Waste Incineration Directive; Solvents Emissions Directive).
- Legislative initiative to reduce CO₂ emissions from Light duty vehicles: aim to reach 140 g CO₂/km in 2008/9 and 120 g CO₂/km by 2012.
- Communication on maritime policy: will summarise results of consultation following the Green Paper (2006), will draw conclusions and follow up actions
- Communication on implementation of national strategies for Green public procurement based on EU targets: proposing regular benchmarking and monitoring.
- Green Paper on Post-2012 Climate Change: identify EU level action areas dealing with adverse effects of climate change, building earlier Commission Communication "Winning the Battle against Global Climate Change".
- Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production: through social/ economic development within carrying capacity of ecosystems and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

- Revision of Regulation on revised eco-label award scheme: enhancing profile and market take-up, special focus on needs of SMEs and links to Green Public Procurement.

8. Health

- Social Reality Stocktaking: a stock-take on dynamics of social change and perceptions of well-being (economic and quality of life); a contribution to debate on "Social Europe".
- Community Framework for Safe and Efficient Health Services: legislative response to recent ECJ judgements on patient mobility; aim for a framework to cover cross-border treatment.
- White Paper on Nutrition a strategy for nutrition at EU level; promoting healthy lifestyles, dealing with obesity etc.
- Communication on Organ Donation and Transplantation will examine what measures are needed at EU level to ensure standards of quality and safety of organs.
- Communication on the follow-up to the Green Paper on "Adapting Labour Law for Ensuring Flexibility and Security for All" will summarise results of consultation on the future of labour law and set out possible future directions.
- Revision of General Block Exemption Regulations on Arts 87 and 88, EC Treaty will cover existing block exemptions and add new areas such as innovation, environment, risk capital and regional aid.

9. Agriculture and Rural Development

The "CAP Health Check" forms the backdrop to the Commission's work in 2007. This initiative will look at simplification, proper implementation of on-going CAP reforms and, crucially, CAP post-2013 fore-shadowing EU budget reviews.

- Proposal for a Regulation on the common market organisation of wine.
- Communication on the Animal Health Strategy 2007-2013: presenting the Community Animal Health Policy (CAHP); clear objectives reflecting customer priorities, the budgetary impact, coherence of CAHP with the other EU policies and international agreements (SPS), minimising the regulatory burden.
- Regulation on animal by-products: review the health rules on animal by-products, removing disproportionate provisions, increasing benefits by simplifying and avoiding duplication of administrative procedures for national authorities and operators.

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