

European & External Affairs Committee

EUR(2) 01-05(P2)

Date: 20 January 2005

Time: 09:00 am

Venue: Committee Rooms 3 and 4, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Minister's Report

Purpose

1. To provide an update on a range of issues arising since the last meeting of the Committee.

Recommendation

2. Members to note the content of the report.

Background

3. The Committee last met on 9 December. This paper provides an update.

First Minister's International Activities

8 - 9 December. Meeting with Guy Saint-Jacques, High Commissioner and David Plunkett, Commercial Economic Minister, Canada. I met with Guy Saint-Jacques, High Commissioner and David Plunkett, Commercial Economic Minister, Canada, to discuss devolution, language issues, foot & mouth disease, electoral reform and childcare initiatives.

14 December. Meeting with Her Excellency Liniwe Mabuza, South Africa

High Commissioner. I received a courtesy call from Her Excellency Liniwe Mabuza,

South Africa High Commissioner. Her Excellency held discussions with the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language regarding links between South Africa and Wales.

19 January. Meeting with His Excellency Giancarlo Aagona, Italian Ambassador and trade delegation. The purpose was to establish links and to promote joint working.

Other Issues

Brussels European Council 16/17 December 2004

The further enlargement of the EU dominated the agenda.

As anticipated, Turkey was given a date to begin EU membership negotiations. The issue of Cyprus, however, remains as sensitive as ever. Turkey must sign a customs accord extending to all EU members, including Cyprus and do so by the start of entry talks, proposed for 3 October 2005. There is no guarantee of full membership if conditions are not met. Turkey must continue with political and economic reforms and some safeguards may remain over the migration of workers. The process could take up to fifteen years.

Romania and Bulgaria were invited to sign entry treaties in April 2005, ahead of their planned accession in January 2007. Safeguard clauses will provide for measures to address serious problems that may arise before accession or in the three years after accession.

March 17 is a critical date for Croatia. The Council signalled that accession talks can commence on that date but only if the country co-operates fully with the International War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Other issues discussed included terrorism, external affairs, area of freedom, security and justice: the EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 and the Financial Framework 2007-2013: principles and guidelines. The full text of the Presidency Conclusions can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/councils/bx20041216/index_en.htm

Autumn 2004 Report on Euro Preparations

HM Treasury have published the latest Euro Preparations Report. The report sets out the progress that has been made in Euro preparations across the UK economy since the previous report published in April 2004. The document outlines :

- The UK Government policy of being in favour of UK membership of EMU; in practice the economic conditions must be right.
- HM Treasury will review progress at Budget time next year
- Preparations in central government departments are well advanced
- Work with local authorities to produce model changeover plans continues
- In Wales, the Wales Euro Preparations Committee (WEPC) last met on 25 October 2004.

Copies of the report will be distributed to Committee members. In the meantime, the report is available

on the HM Treasury website at the following link:

http://www.euro.gov.uk/prep_reports_pages.asp?id=11&pg=1&ls=2

The Secretary of State for Wales, Peter Hain, who chairs the meeting has been invited to a future meeting of the committee to update members on progress of WEPC.

White Paper on Prospects for the EU in 2005

There will be a White Paper on Prospects for the EU in 2005 published on 1st February by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). This new White Paper will cover all of 2005 (there were 2 in 2004) and the purpose is to update MPs and the public on significant EU policy initiatives since the last publication in September and any new developments we expect this coming year.

Relationship with Silesia: Health issues update

At the last meeting, members requested an update on the visit to Silesia in September 2004.

The visit to Katowice in September was very positive. The team consisted of Krysia Lewandowski, International Recruitment Co-ordinator, Welsh Assembly Government; Jane Ashwell, Senior Medical Officer, Welsh Assembly Government; and, Ian Jones, General Dental Practitioner, Pembrokeshire. Each delivered a presentation to the Regional Chamber of Doctors and Dentists about living and working in Wales as consultants and dentists, followed by a Q&A session.

The following morning they also met with the Deputy Director of the Employment Services/Labour Office.

The visit was well received on all counts and it was made clear that future collaboration would be very welcomed at all levels. One issue that became apparent was that of English language proficiency. It seems there are no local resources in Katowice. The implications of this are being considered.

Another visit is planned in April. This is in the very early stages of development and will involve Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust. This project could potentially set a model for future links in all clinical and educational fields.

Rhodri Morgan AM
First Minister

EEAC First Ministers's Report

Date	Assembly Minister/ Official/ Division	Event	Objectives	Outcomes
8 - 9 December2004	First Minister EDTM	Meetings with Guy Saint- Jacques, High Commissioner and David Plunkett Commercial Economic Minister, Canada	To discuss: Devolution Language Issues Foot & mouth disease Electoral reform Childcare initiatives	Objective achieved
8 December2004	First Minister	Reception for Honorary Consuls & Official Rpresentatives in Wales	To thank Honorary Consuls for their help and assistance throughout the previous year and to introduce them to the International Strategy document recently approved by EAC	Objective achieved
10 December2004	Permanent Secretary & Director of Economic Development and Transport	Meeting with Sir Michael Arthur, British High Commissioner to India	Sir Michael was back in the UK on a briefing tour. He visited Wales to discuss with senior officials developments in Wales post-devolution. He also met with WTI, representatives of Cintec International Ltd, ATL Telecom Limited, Sceptre Communications (UK) Ltd, Birchfield Interactive PLC, Schmid Telecom, WDA, Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University and Chair of the Board Cardiff Chamber of	Objective achieved

			Commerce Trade and Industry	
14 December 2004	First Minister & Minister for Sport, Culture & the Welsh Language	Meeting with HE Ms Lindiwe Mabuza, South African High Commissioner	Courtesy call on the First Minister and discussions with the Culture Minister on links between South Africa and Wales	Objective achieved
14 December	Alun Pugh	Minister to meet SA High Commissioner	Discuss cultural issues	Objective achieved
15 December 2004	Jane Davidson AM Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning	Strengthening European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training Conference (Maastricht)	Bring together the key political and practical players involved in adopting and implementing the Maastricht Communiqué. Two years on from the Copenhagen Declaration, the Communiqué will set new priorities and strategies for European cooperation, aimed at meeting the Lisbon goals in the field of vocational education and training. The basis for discussion during the Conference was the results of the Maastricht Study on "Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of Vocational Education and Training". Provide a platform for those involved from a practical or policy point of view from all over Europe: providers of vocational education, as well as professional education, representatives from	Objective achieved

			enterprises, employers and trade unions, policy experts, members of the European Parliament, journalists and Leonardo da Vinci Agencies.	
19 January 2005	First Minister and others to be determined	Visit of HE Giancarlo Aragona, Italian Ambassador	Visited Wales with a small business and Tourism delegation to establish links and to promote joint working.	Objective achieved