

**Y Pwyllgor Materion Cyfansoddiadol a Deddfwriaethol
Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Latvian Presidency of the EU
c/o Latvian Permanent Representation to the EU
Avenue des Arts 23
1000 Brussels
Belgium

27 February 2015

Dear Minister Rinkēvičs

As Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee at the National Assembly for Wales it is a pleasure to write to you and share some observations which we trust will be considered constructive and valuable as part of the ongoing debate on improving EU governance launched under the Italian Presidency of the EU and which will continue to be a theme under the Latvian Presidency.

We place a high level of importance in the National Assembly for Wales on positive engagement in the EU policy and legislative process. We undertook an inquiry into Wales' role in EU decision-making during 2013-2014 and I attach a copy of our report for your information. It drew mainly positive conclusions about the way in which Wales engages with the EU decision-making process, whilst also recognising some of the challenges we face as a sub-Member State entity.

Therefore, we very much welcome this debate on how the EU can most effectively engage with citizens to address concerns over democratic deficit. These discussions are also timely given the internal discussions within the UK and Wales about the future of devolution, which has taken on an increased momentum following the recent Scottish Referendum.

One clearly important issue is how to engage effectively with parliaments and legislative assemblies across the EU, as the democratically elected bodies representing citizens. To date these discussions have focused on national

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parliaments with no consideration of the role of sub-Member State parliaments.

In Wales, the Assembly plays a key role in engaging the people of Wales in EU policy and law-making. This includes drawing attention to and explaining the relevance of EU policy/legislative developments, as well as acting as forum where Welsh stakeholders can debate and share their views/concerns, which we feed into the EU policy cycle through the Welsh MEPs and other MEPs in a 'legislature to legislature' dialogue, as well as communicating directly with the European Commission, Committee of the Regions and other Brussels-based bodies. We also have responsibility for overseeing the transposition of relevant EU legislation in Wales, and scrutinising compliance by the Welsh Government in implementing EU legislation, which includes most EU environmental legislation, agriculture (including CAP), animal welfare, education, health, culture, as well as overseeing the management and implementation of EU Structural and Investment Funds in Wales.

One real and practical way in which our role could be given stronger recognition, would be to involve politicians from sub-Member State parliaments in discussions in Brussels on these questions of governance. This includes participation in hearings in the European Parliament, in working groups organised by Council, in conferences and other fora where these issues are debated. We would be keen to be involved in such initiatives, and I have spoken at a number of EU conferences over the past year (including conferences organised by the Committee of the Regions, an institution with which we have excellent working relationships) about our work in Wales and more broadly on the role that sub-Member State parliaments can play in the EU decision-making processes.

I am also writing to the First Vice President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans and to the Chair of the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee Professor Danuta Hübner to draw their attention to these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Melding', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Melding AM
Chair

cc His Excellency Andris Teikmanis, Latvian Ambassador to the UK;

Her Excellency Ilze Juhansone, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Latvia to the EU