04 August 2015

Dear Christina,

Fiona Hyslop wrote to you on 4th March with a summary of the Scottish Government's EU engagement in Brussels during the Italian Presidency of the EU in the latter half of 2014. I would now like to provide the Committee with an updated report of our Brussels-based engagement over the period of the subsequent Latvian Presidency of the EU, which ran from 1st January to 30th June 2015.

As covered in previous engagement with the Committee, the Scottish Government launched on 27th March a revised strategy of engagement in Europe through 'Scotland's Action Plan for EU Engagement'. The main areas of the Action Plan have now begun to bed-in around the Scottish Government's activity in Europe and this is reflected in the volume, focus and approach of our engagement in Brussels. The attached summary now provides an update in this regard; focussing on our Brussels based engagement during the Latvian Presidency.

I hope this is helpful in advance of Committee meetings in September.

Best Wishes,

HUMZA YOUSAF

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Scottish Government’s Brussels-based engagement during the period of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Scotland’s Action Plan for EU Engagement

In the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government 2014-2015 there was an commitment to develop an Action Plan for EU Engagement (http://www.gov.scot/Topics/International/Europe) to set out the Scottish Government’s aim of protecting Scotland’s place in the EU and promoting a vision of securing a strong and positive Scottish influence on key areas of EU policy of interest to Scotland. This was published on 27th March 2015.

The Action Plan is underpinned by, and interlinked with, Scotland’s Economic Strategy, supporting the four priorities of Investment, Innovation, Inclusive Growth and International Outlook. In parallel with Scotland’s International Framework, published on 25th March, the Action Plan further supports the government’s economic goals of increasing competitiveness and tackling inequality.

The Plan is structured around four key areas to bring focus and purpose to the Scottish Government’s EU activity:

- **Being a committed partner** – we will remain a committed European actor, making the case for our place in Europe, and working to enhance Scotland’s voice;
- **EU Reform** – we will promote effective and meaningful EU reform within the framework of the existing EU treaties for the benefit of Scotland and the entire territory of the EU;
- **Active participation** – we will work to secure investment, innovation and inclusive growth in support of Scotland’s Economic Strategy;
- **Strengthening partnerships** – we will strengthen our relationships with European partners to develop and deliver mutually beneficial outcomes, policies and programmes, in pursuit of our objectives.

All of the engagement included in this summary, covering the period before and after publication of the Action Plan, relates either wholly or in part to each of these key areas.

In addition to the static document that was produced, a significant benefit of the new approach is to utilise the flexibility of the Action Plan’s new online platform. This makes it easier to provide current updates on activity to the public and stakeholders through policy developments and case studies, which demonstrate both the Scottish Government’s commitment to delivering our EU objectives and the detail of how this is happening in practice in Brussels, Scotland and elsewhere in Europe. Examples of these include the Scottish Government’s participation in the Vanguard Initiative, a group of 27 European Regions committed to working in collaboration to deliver industrial growth and development in areas of specialism; involvement in European Structural Funds programmes that have delivered investment in Scotland, helping to reduce inequalities, and examples of engagement
in key policy events in Brussels, such as the EU’s Green Week. Information on these and other examples are available at: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/International/Europe/Case-Studies

Latvian Presidency

Latvia took the second slot in the trio Presidency, following Italy and preceding Luxembourg. Their headline priorities were to progress the EU agenda to deliver a competitive, digital and engaged Europe. There have, however, been a number of major issues in addition to the Presidency Work Programme which have commanded the EU’s efforts and attention over the first half of 2015. In particular, attention has been focused on the economic crisis in Greece and the humanitarian emergency in the Mediterranean with the continuing surge of migrants attempting perilous and often catastrophic voyages to reach Europe.

Despite these events, Latvia concluded its presidency term and delivered its report to the institutions on its achievements and other areas of progress. Listed amongst these were: the European Fund for Strategic Investment; Energy Union and Climate Change; the Digital Single Market, including progress on a Single Telecoms Market; Migration; Security, including an Internal Security Strategy and Data Protection measures; the Eastern Partnership Summit, hosted in Riga; and keeping on course Council interests in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

During the Latvian Presidency, the Scottish Government continued to deepen engagement across the institutions. We have also continued to widen and develop our networks in Brussels amongst other Member States and Regions, and with key stakeholders, guided by the principles of the Action Plan and our economic objectives.

In relation to direct engagement, Scotland supported the Latvian Presidency with the secondment of a member of staff from the Scottish Government into the Permanent Representation’s climate change team. The Brussels office also hosted colleagues from the Latvian Presidency at its annual Burns supper and collaborated with them in a joint reception to celebrate cultural links between Latvia and Scotland, showcasing the talents of Latvian pianist, Olga Jegunova, paired with the Scottish soprano, Marie Claire Breen. The Scottish Government also jointly hosted a market awareness event in Edinburgh with the Latvian Ambassador to the UK, highlighting the opportunities for Scottish organisations and businesses in Latvia.

Council

Throughout the Latvian Presidency Ministers have continued to attend and actively participate in Council meetings. Between January and June, Ministers attended eight separate Councils. These covered Agriculture and Fisheries (Richard Lochhead and Aileen McLeod), Justice and Home Affairs (Paul Wheelhouse), Environment (Aileen McLeod) and Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (Fiona Hyslop). These are summarised in the table below:
### Council Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (*) Luxembourg</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26/01/2015</td>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Richard Lochhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13/03/2015</td>
<td>Justice and Home Affairs</td>
<td>Paul Wheelhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/03/2015</td>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Richard Lochhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/04/2015*</td>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Richard Lochhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/05/2015</td>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Richard Lochhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/05/2015</td>
<td>Education, Youth, Culture and Sport</td>
<td>Fiona Hyslop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/06/2015*</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Aileen McLeod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/06/2015*</td>
<td>Agriculture and Fisheries</td>
<td>Aileen McLeod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, Scottish Government officials continued to regularly attend Council working groups in Brussels where they followed in detail the development of dossiers, engaged with the UK lead officials and made connections with participants from other Member States.

### Commission

Since the Commission published its Work Programme for 2015 last December, momentum continues to grow around key strategic priorities, such as the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), the Digital Single Market and an EU Energy Union. Other priorities such as Migration and further Economic and Monetary Union have been significantly more challenging, particularly in light of the humanitarian emergency in the Mediterranean and the Greek debt crisis. Nonetheless, the Scottish Government continues to broaden its engagement and work constructively with the European Commission, at both Ministerial and official level.

During her visit to Brussels on 2\textsuperscript{nd} June, the First Minister met with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Between January and June, other Ministers met with European Commissioners on several occasions, both in direct meetings and as part of wider engagements. Agriculture and Development Commissioner, Phil Hogan (Ireland), attended the Royal Highland Show in June where he met with Richard Lochhead and Aileen McLeod to discuss their respective portfolios. Mr Lochhead and Dr McLeod also met with Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner, Karmenu Vella (Malta), both during Council meetings and as part of the EU’s flagship Environment policy event ‘Green Week’ held in Brussels in June. The Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training, Roseanna Cunningham, shared a platform with the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen (Belgium), at a conference examining Europe’s jobs policy.

Non-Ministerial engagement has also continued through participation in key Commission policy events. In addition to Green Week mentioned above, the Scottish Government EU office co-hosted two events during the Commission’s Sustainable Energy Week in June. The first was to promote the results of the ISLES II project - an EU funded initiative, led by the Scottish Government, designed to demonstrate the feasibility of cross boarder grid interconnections between Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the wider UK. The second event, entitled ‘From
Isolation to Integration - Island Solutions to Europe’s Energy Challenges', showcased the efforts in Scotland and elsewhere in Europe to develop integrated energy systems on islands.

Scottish Government officials, in partnership with Scotland Europa, have continued to play a leading role in the development of the Vanguard Initiative. This has included work to influence the direction of developing Commission policy. For example, Scotland was recently invited to participate in the launch of a new Smart Specialisation Platform for Energy. The purpose of the platform is to support knowledge based development of energy policy and to facilitate collaboration between Member States and Regions. As well as speaking at the launch, Scotland was invited to draft a submission with suggestions of areas of focus for the platform. This was developed in partnership between the Scottish Government, Scotland Europa, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise and was submitted to the Commission.

As well as the work to influence policy, Scotland’s participation in the Vanguard Initiative has a practical, industry focus. Scotland, along with the Basque Country are leading the development of a pilot project in the development of Advanced Manufacturing for Energy Related Applications in Harsh Environments. The aim is to strengthen a sector of European manufacturing which is well positioned to dominate global markets. The combination of EU regional strengths across energy and advanced manufacturing domains within the Vanguard Initiative (and beyond) has significant potential to generate new ideas, technologies and applications. Ten other EU regions have committed to taking forward this activity.

The Scottish Government also submitted, as in previous years, a Scotland specific National Reform Programme report for 2015 under the EU2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth following a meeting with stakeholders in Edinburgh. This report is available here: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/05/6659

At official level, engagement with European Commission staff continues through routine and regular meetings across all our of our areas of interest.

This engagement is further strengthened by secondments in key areas within the European Commission. There are currently four members of Scottish Government supported staff working in the Commission as Seconded National Experts - covering Environment, Climate, Justice and Marine interests.

European Parliament

As with the other institutions, the programme of work in the European Parliament is picking up pace as it passes the one year mark since the elections in May 2014. Workload across the parliament’s range of committees is increasing and the Parliament is starting to make its presence felt on some key issues, such as the work of the Committee on International Trade with its resolution on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Plenary sessions are therefore dealing increasingly with issues of substance.
Relations between the Scottish Government and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) continues to expand. As a matter of course, each Ministerial visit to Brussels aims to contain engagement with MEPs as an integral part of the programme (subject to sitting weeks, availability and timings). This includes meetings with Scotland’s MEPs on a range of subjects - from Fisheries and Agriculture to Trade and Environment. There has also been engagement with MEPs from other EU countries where their parliamentary activities reflect Scotland’s interests. The First Minister and Ministers Humza Yousaf, Paul Wheelhouse and Keith Brown met with MEPs during their respective visits to Brussels and MEPs (from Scotland, Latvia and Luxembourg) also attended the annual Burns supper hosted by the Scottish Government’s EU office.

At official level, engagement with MEPs continues on a regular and routine basis as issues arise and information is requested.

On the cultural side, the EU office co-hosted a legacy exhibition of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in the European Parliament, in conjunction with Catherine Stihler MEP. This was a great opportunity to show how the Games, through the efforts of its many partners, delivered regeneration, job creation and sustainable growth.

**European Policy Centre Event - Scotland’s Commitment to Europe**
During her visit to Brussels on 2nd June 2015, the First Minister delivered a keynote speech to the European Policy Centre on ‘Scotland’s Commitment to Europe’, which is available to read here: [http://news.scotland.gov.uk/Speeches-Briefings/First-Minister-speech-to-European-Policy-Centre-1977.aspx](http://news.scotland.gov.uk/Speeches-Briefings/First-Minister-speech-to-European-Policy-Centre-1977.aspx).
Luxembourg started its Presidency on 1st July, the third in the trio following that of Italy and Latvia. They have set out their key priority areas under the following headings:

- Stimulating investment to boost growth and employment
- Deepening the European Union’s social dimension
- Managing migration, combining freedom, justice and security
- Revitalising the single market by focusing on its digital dimension
- Placing European competitiveness in a global and transparent framework
- Promoting sustainable development
- Strengthening the European Union’s presence on the global stage

Economic initiatives such as the European Fund for Strategic Investment and the Digital Single Market will be key areas of focus to drive jobs and growth. Financial files will also feature around Capital Markets Union, Taxation and further Banking and Economic and Monetary Union. On Justice, migration issues will continue to be a major topic, as will data protection. Luxembourg will be in the seat for the UN Climate Change (COP) meeting in Paris in December and energy security will also be on their agenda, particularly with the onset of the winter and increasing demand for Russian gas. With regard to social affairs, mobility will be a key issue as will the EU/US Trade negotiations.

Greece, Ukraine and Migration in the Mediterranean are all issues that may impact on the flow of business at European Council during the Luxembourg Presidency.

Officials are already engaging on policy specific matters in the course of general work programmes where Scotland has a specific interest, such as in agriculture, fisheries, environment, energy, innovation, digital, equality, justice, culture and on others areas as they arise. The Minister for Europe and International Development, Humza Yousaf, also met with the Luxembourg Ambassador to the UK in July to discuss the Presidency.