

Participation in External Bodies: European Bodies

Introduction

1. Earlier in this session, the Parliament nominated two members to be representatives on the European Committee of the Regions UK Contact Group.
2. It was agreed it would be helpful for the individuals nominated to be members of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee.
3. The convention is for the main representative to come from the party of government
4. The main representative on the Contact Group (Kate Forbes) is no longer a member of that committee. This paper proposes a replacement for Ms Forbes as the Parliament's main representative on the UK Contact Group.

Committee of the Regions UK Contact Group

5. When the UK was a member of the European Union, the Scottish Parliament was able to nominate representatives to the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The CoR is an institution of the European Union (established in the EU Treaties) which represents the interests of regional and local authorities in the European Union and addresses opinions on their behalf to the Council of the European Union and the European Commission.
6. When the UK left the European Union, it lost the right to nominate members to the Committee of the Regions.
7. At its meeting on 11 February 2020, the CoR Bureau agreed to [establish the UK Contact Group](#) with the aim of maintaining:

‘relations with representatives of UK local government and devolved administrations to ensure that political dialogue with these representatives continues.’

8. Recognising the desire to maintain institutional links at regional level, the UK Contact Group is intended to maintain lines of communication between local and regional authorities in the European Union and the UK's cities, regions and devolved administrations. According to the Committee of the Regions:

“The Contact Group will meet up to three times a year to discuss issues linked to trade, the movement of goods, persons and services, and methods of continuing cross-border cooperation.

It is a unilateral body comprising 12 full members from the CoR, plus an observer from the CoR's newly formed Green group. The UK Contact Group will invite representatives of UK local government and devolved parliaments and assemblies to its meeting, based on the agenda of each particular meeting.

The Contact Group may also take up invitations from UK local governments, devolved parliaments and assemblies to host meetings in the UK.”

9. The [agreed objectives and role of the new group](#) are to:

- act as a forum for continuing dialogue and political partnership between EU and UK devolved legislatures and local and regional governments/authorities and exchange know-how, in particular on cross-border issues;
- provide the opportunity to discuss problems or opportunities arising from the withdrawal regarding the relationship between these institutions both within the EU and the UK;
- give these institutions a means of discussing EU legislation and possible changes where the legislation might impact even after the UK's departure from the EU.

10. The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee has considered whether the Scottish Parliament should participate in the UK Contact Group. It concluded that participation would be beneficial to the Parliament.

11. Participation in the UK Contact Group would help support the Parliament's core post-EU scrutiny function, for example, by supporting scrutiny of the operation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement where it relates to devolved policy areas.

Conclusion

12. Discussions between Business Team Clerks and Clerks to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee indicate that George Adam has expressed an interest in being the Parliament's main representative on the UK Contact Group. Neil Bibby remains the substitute or second representative.

13. On the basis of the information above, the Bureau is invited to nominate—

- George Adam as the Parliament's main representative on the Committee of Regions UK Contact Group

**Parliamentary Business Team
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