

UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: Fourth meeting summary report

March 2024

The Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA) is a formal body established under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). It plays an important role in overseeing the implementation of the TCA and all future UK-EU agreements.

The fourth meeting of the PPA took place in London on 4 and 5 December 2023. This report provides a summary of issues of importance to Wales discussed at the meeting. This report also reflects on the continued development and evolution of the body and the Senedd's role and work in it.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and Samuel Kurtz MS, a member of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, participated in the third meeting and the report has been agreed by them in that capacity.

If you are interested in the work of the Senedd on the PPA or would like to contribute in future to Senedd engagement ahead of its meetings, please contact Nia.Moss@senedd.wales.



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1. Issues of importance to the Senedd and Wales

The UK-EU [Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) (TCA) covers large areas of devolved competence or issues that have a significant impact on them. You can find more information about what these are, how these affect Wales and the role of the PPA in the Senedd Research [guides and infographics on the agreement](#).

Key issues of importance to Wales were discussed in the meeting including on youth mobility, mobility for the culture and sport sectors, fisheries, citizens' rights, data protection, climate change cooperation, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and energy cooperation. Important future areas for cooperation, such as on the development and regulation of artificial intelligence (AI) were also discussed by delegates.

For the first time, Members of the Senedd were invited to contribute to a plenary item and Huw Irranca-Davies MS spoke about the importance of youth mobility and the Welsh Government's [Taith scheme](#).

Organisations in Wales were invited to submit their views to us ahead of the meeting. We're grateful to all those that were able to do so within the short timescales provided to us. These views were reflected in a written briefing provided to UK delegation members and in contributions from Members of the Senedd during the meeting.

You can watch [the proceedings in full](#) on the UK Parliament's YouTube channel.

“The rebuilding of trust”: a more positive phase in the relationship

Both the UK Government's Minister for Europe, Leo Docherty MP, and the EU's Ambassador to the UK, Pedro Serrano, emphasised the positive and productive tone in UK-EU relations over the last 12 months. Ambassador Serrano said that the “rebuilding of trust marks this year” with the outcome being greater cooperation.

Minister Docherty praised discussions and work through the TCA forums on the digital economy, cooperation on pharmaceuticals, organics and access for UK lawyers to the EU's market and said the UK is open to discussions on improving youth mobility, cooperation on culture and the development and regulation of AI.

Ambassador Serrano noted that full implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, including full implementation of the Windsor Framework and

citizens' rights obligations, are essential to further cooperation under the TCA. Ambassador Serrano said that the level playing field provisions of the TCA remain important issues for the EU and that it will continue to follow closely UK reforms to retained EU law and the UK's compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights which is a pre-requisite for law enforcement cooperation in the TCA. He called for early and pragmatic discussions on fisheries after 2026 and said the work for full and ambitious implementation of the TCA must continue.

The issue of the transparency of the TCA's governance structures and decisions taken within them was raised by members of the PPA. This is an issue addressed by the Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee [in its report on UK-EU Governance](#).

“Mobility creates valuable opportunities”

In its [third recommendation](#) to the Partnership Council, the PPA recognised the valuable opportunities that mobility of citizens, particularly youth and cultural mobility, creates. In recognition of the broad support on both sides to improve the ability of young people and touring artists to travel, move and work cross-border, the PPA called on the Partnership Council and EU Member States to work collaboratively to improve opportunities available. It called on the UK and EU to allow the use of identity cards for organised school trips and to waive visa requirements. It expressed concern that the UK has agreed to do this for some EU Member States but not all and said that a non-discriminatory approach is essential.

The UK opted not to remain part of the UK's youth and education mobility programme, Erasmus+, after Brexit. Huw Irranca-Davies MS reminded the plenary of the Welsh Government's support for the UK to re-join the Erasmus+ programme and drew delegates' attention to the Welsh Government's [Taith programme](#) which supports participants to come to Wales as well as supporting Welsh organisations and participants to go abroad.

The recommendation makes specific asks for touring artists, an issue discussed several times at the PPA. The PPA urges the UK and EU to prioritise the mobility of touring artists in the review of the implementation of the TCA due before 2026. It calls for both sides to redouble their efforts to streamline visa and customs arrangements for touring artists and their teams and to extend the length of visas available for touring.

Members of the Senedd also drew attention to the issues facing professional and voluntary sporting organisations and athletes post-Brexit and called for the issues facing this sector to also be recognised.

The Senedd's Culture Committee is undertaking an inquiry on [culture and the new relationship with the EU](#). Baroness Deborah Bull, member of the PPA's UK delegation, [opened the inquiry](#) by appearing before the Committee to give evidence on 8 February 2024.

The PPA called on the Partnership Council to respond to its recommendation before the next meeting of the PPA in March 2024.

Progress on citizens' rights welcome but more to do

The progress made in protecting the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU was welcomed. However, [the breakout group](#) on citizens' rights called on the UK Government to take a simple and compassionate approach to implementing the [High Court ruling on the status of EU citizens](#).

It called on training to be provided to police and border forces in the UK and the EU on the rights of citizens travelling or residing for short periods, and called on the European Commission to play a role on providing easily accessible information to UK citizens. The importance of support for organisations working with citizens, particularly vulnerable people, to uphold their rights was emphasised. The group called on both the UK and EU to provide sufficient support.

The Senedd's [Equality and Social Justice Committee monitors](#) European citizens' rights in Wales.

Room for constructive cooperation on fisheries

Recognising that fisheries remains a contested and contentious area between the UK and EU, [the breakout group](#) nonetheless found areas where constructive cooperation could benefit the industry on both sides. Addressing issues facing Irish and Northern Irish fishing communities is one area where agreeing a common solution could help build trust for wider fishing negotiations.

The group called for a collaborative approach to sustainable fisheries management that engages local communities. They agreed there should be a multi-annual approach beyond 2026 to create certainty for communities on both sides with mechanisms for evidence-based stock changes.

Failure to cooperate on emissions trading, energy and climate creates risks

The need for close cooperation on international climate commitments and energy cooperation were common calls from members of the PPA. Speaking in the Plenary session, UK Government officials said they were disappointed with progress made to implement the energy title of the TCA and in particular called for greater progress on developing efficient electricity trading arrangements.

Progress on energy cooperation in the North Sea was welcomed but UK and EU members but both called for this to be extended to deepening cooperation in the Celtic Sea and Atlantic. [Members of the Senedd raised the issue of Celtic Sea cooperation](#) in the last meeting of the PPA.

Concern was raised from members on both sides about the risks of potentially different approaches to emissions trading and carbon leakage in the UK and EU. The potential implications of the introduction of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) without cooperation and an equivalent scheme in the UK was discussed. Baroness Hayter raised concerns about the implications of CBAM for the Welsh steel industry on behalf of Members of the Senedd during the debate. Seán Kelly MEP, Vice-President for the European Parliament delegation, called for the PPA to act as a forum to eliminate conflict and clashes on emissions prices and carbon adjustment.

UK Government officials said the Government was open to further cooperation on emissions trading.

The TCA's environment, climate and energy provisions are explained in [a Senedd Research guide](#).

Data protection and digital growth are key areas of common interest

The [breakout group](#) noted that the UK and EU's digital economies are lagging behind the US and other regions and said both parties should collaborate to ensure protection of citizens whilst enabling innovation and growth. It called for continued legislative cooperation and engagement between the UK and the EU to ensure standards are maintained, and that both sides should avoid the lapsing or risking of data adequacy agreements.

The “essential importance of taking action to protect our democracies from misinformation and interference” was identified as a critical area for close cooperation.

2. Senedd engagement in the work of the PPA

Devolved legislatures have much to contribute to the work of the PPA, as this report shows. Devolved members’ positive contribution is supported by the level of stakeholder interest and engagement from Wales.

The [summary report on the third meeting](#) considered progress made against five recommendations. Welcome progress continued to be made in the third meeting which shows that the engagement of the Senedd and devolved legislatures in the work of the body is becoming embedded. Particularly welcome during the third meeting was the invitation for members of the devolved legislatures to contribute to the discussion on a plenary item.

For Wales, this enabled us to raise the important work on mobility being done in Wales and the continued challenges facing our businesses, culture and sporting organisations. Breakout groups also enabled us to raise issues related to citizens’ rights and the important work of the Senedd’s Equality and Social Justice Committee on monitoring the operation of the EU Settlement Scheme in Wales. We also raised issues of concern for Welsh fisheries and seas.

Nonetheless, our recommendations on embedding the role of the devolved legislatures in the PPA and the need for the continued consideration of allowing the devolved legislatures to participate in all plenary discussions in devolved areas remain valid.

Whilst appreciating the opportunity to contribute to the mobility item, there were many other items where we could have made a positive contribution, for example, on issues related to the impact of the EU’s CBAM on the Welsh steel industry. We note and welcome the support from Members of the European Parliament’s delegation for granting full speaking rights for devolved legislatures during the plenary sessions.

We appreciate the limited time available to all members of the PPA to contribute during plenary debates but continue to press for time to be found for the devolved legislatures. The PPA plays a hugely important role in strengthening relationships between the UK and the EU and the devolved legislatures can make a positive contribution to the development of ideas and sharing of good practice.

The Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee's [report on UK-EU Governance](#) recognises the important evolution in the working arrangements of the PPA and its importance as a place where political solutions can be found.

Stakeholder engagement

We are grateful for the willingness of stakeholders in Wales to submit evidence, issues and views to us ahead of the last meeting of the PPA. It is invaluable in ensuring that issues of importance to Wales are properly fed in. A key challenge in seeking to engage formally with stakeholders ahead of meetings is that agendas are shared at a very late stage. We will continue to work to improve how and when we engage stakeholders ahead of meetings of the PPA.

The [Senedd Commission has accepted](#) the recommendation made by the Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, that the Senedd should work with relevant chairs of Senedd committees and Members of the Senedd on UK-EU delegations to facilitate stakeholder engagement on UK-EU issues. We look forward to contributing to the work to take this forward.

Engagement with the UK and EU delegations and other Senedd Committees

We drew our last report to the attention of relevant Senedd committees and the First Minister for Wales. We are grateful for their positive response and we will continue to engage with them. We warmly welcome the engagement between the Senedd Culture, , and International Relations Committee and Baroness Bull as part of [its inquiry into Culture and the new relationship with the EU](#) based on her important work on this issue through the PPA.

Senedd committees have continued to engage with UK and EU counterparts on UK-EU issues. The [Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee](#) and the [Economy and Trade Committee](#) engaged with members of the European Parliament's delegation when they visited Brussels in September and November 2023.