

Exiting the European Union: Preparedness in Wales for the end of the transition period

Survey findings

October 2020

Background

The External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee is undertaking an inquiry into preparedness in Wales for the end of the transition period.

As part of its scrutiny, the Committee conducted a survey, facilitated by the Citizen Engagement Team, to gather the views of individuals and businesses on the information available from the Welsh Government to help them prepare for the end of the transition period.

The survey closed on 19 October 2020.

Survey promotion and analysis

The survey was promoted extensively through a variety of channels including:

- via the networks and social media platforms of key stakeholders;
- on the Senedd's website and social media platforms. This included focused advertisements which allowed us to target audiences in areas where we often get a lower response rate.

Results are calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents to the survey. We have received **196 responses** to the survey.



Each question is addressed in turn.

1. The UK is now in a transition period until 31 December 2020. In order to prepare citizens, organisations and sectors for the end of the transition period, the Welsh Government has produced a number of resources, including a 'Preparing Wales' website, a Brexit Portal and dedicated events.

When thinking about the information available from the Welsh Government to help you prepare for the end of the transition period, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:-

"I am aware of the breadth of information available from the Welsh Government to help me prepare for the end of the transition period."

52.6% of respondents to this question, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement. 19.1% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whilst 28.3% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

2. Have you accessed any information provided by the Welsh Government to help you prepare for the end of the transition period?

75.9% of respondents to this question had not accessed any information provided by the Welsh Government to help them prepare for the end of the transition period. 16.4% of respondents to this question had accessed information provided by the Welsh Government, whilst 7.7% of respondents did not know.

3. Are there any reasons why you have chosen not to access any information provided by the Welsh Government to help you prepare for the end of the transition period? Please select all that apply.

A lack of awareness about the range of information available from the Welsh Government to help them prepare for the end of the transition period was the option most selected by respondents to this question (49.3%).

This was followed by a lack of need for information from the Welsh Government (22.4%). Some respondents were unable to find the information they needed from the Welsh Government (11.9%), whilst others had sought information elsewhere (10.5%).

Some respondents said the subject for which they required information is not devolved to Wales (6.0%), whilst the 'Don't know' option was selected the least often (1.5%).

For those who selected 'Other (please specify)' (9.7%), most answers conveyed a lack of trust and/or faith in the Welsh Government:-

- *"No faith in the Welsh Government."*
- *"Whatever information you may give out I do not trust the Welsh Government to uphold the Welsh Leave vote."*
- *"Unable to find ANY information from the Welsh Assembly."*
- *"Welsh government do their own things under stealth. Do not trust them."*

4. In relation to which subject or issue have you accessed Welsh Government information? Please select all that apply.

The transition period (50%) and business and the economy (50%) were the subject areas most selected by respondents to this question. These were followed by EU funds (36.4%), health and social services (31.8%) and EU Citizens in Wales (31.8%).

Education and skills (22.7%), local services and third sector (22.7%) and data protection (22.7%) were the next set of subject-areas most selected by respondents to this question.

Disability (18.2%), fisheries (18.2%), community cohesion (18.2%), the environment agriculture and food (13.6%) and transport (9.1%) were options selected less frequently. For those who selected 'Other' (Please specify)' (9.1%), the following answers were given:-

"EU investigations into offshore or illegal funds."

"EU Human Rights"

5. Which of the following Welsh Government resources have you accessed? Please select all that apply.

The most popular option selected by respondents to this question was the Welsh Government's 'Preparing Wales' website (71.4%).

This was followed by the Business Wales Brexit Portal (47.6%) and other online Welsh Government resources such as the Welsh Government's Trade and Investment website, Sell2Wales website and/or the EU Citizens' Immigration Advice Service in Wales (23.8%).

Newsletter – for example, the Business Wales newsletter, Fisheries and Brexit bulletin and/or the EU funds newsletter (14.3%), correspondence from the Welsh Government – for example, letters and/or e-mails (9.5%), Telephone – for example, the Business Wales helpline (4.8%), private meetings with the Welsh Government (4.8%) and events (4.8%), were options selected less often.

6. When thinking about the information available from the Welsh Government to help you prepare for the end of the transition period, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:-

“The information available from the Welsh Government to help me prepare for the end of the transition period is helpful.”

57.1% of respondents to this question disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement. 33.4% of respondents to this question agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whilst 9.5% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

7. In your view, are improvements necessary to the information provided by the Welsh Government to help you prepare for the end of the transition period?

90% of respondents to this question were of the view that improvements are necessary to the information provided by the Welsh Government to help them prepare for the end of the transition period. 5% of respondents to this question did not believe improvements were necessary, whilst a further 5% did not know.

8. What improvements would you like to see made to the information provided by the Welsh Government to help you prepare for the end of the transition period?

Responses to this question were disparate and did not reveal any common themes. The following is a snapshot of the responses received. All responses are available upon request:-

- *“Not really in its gift to clarify what needs to be clarified because of the UK government’s persistent failure to agree a trade deal. We are all doomed frankly. I work in hospitality and have accommodation. I rely on bookings from companies that are based outside the UK and because the UK government is pursuing a no deal Brexit, there won’t be an adequacy agreement allowing us to keep sharing data. Bang. All of our custom gone overnight.”*

- *“It is impossible for the Welsh government to provide useful information without the UK government agreeing something with the European Union.”*
- *“It would be nice to know whether our suppliers in EU countries will consider it worth the bother of filling in customs paperwork to trade with us.”*
- *“Employ people who actually work/have worked in international trade. Everything that comes from WAG is based on civil servants guessing what happens in trade - most of which is commercially sensitive; therefore no business is going to divulge how/what they do.”*
- *“More detailed guidance. Information is often too high level and occasionally appears to be having a dig at the UK government or the leave camp.”*
- *“At a time when the majority are or have been working from home, it would have been pleasing to see the Welsh Government take a more innovative approach to disseminating information to those who need it. I would have welcomed more information available digitally, by way of webinars on specific sectors or topics, that I could have dipped into at my own convenience. People, particularly business owners are working silly hours to try and make sense of what might happen at the end of the transition period so this would have been useful.”*
- *“As much information as possible in as many EU languages as possible.”*
- *“Open information widely available AND ADVERTISED”*

9. If you have accessed information elsewhere to help you prepare for the end of the transition period, from which of the following agencies, bodies and/or authorities have you sought information?

49.3% of respondents to this question had not accessed any information to help them prepare for the end of the transition period.

For those who had accessed information, UK Government technical notices (28.4%) was the option selected most often, followed by public sector organisations (including UK Government departments and non-ministerial government departments such as the Food Standards Agency) (17.6%), third sector (including charities, farming unions and business organisations) (12.8%), local authority (9.5%), private sector (including consultancies) (6.1%). For the 7.4% of responses who

selected 'Other' (please specify), these were some of the most common answers given:-

- "Social media"
- "EU information"
- "EU notices"
- "BBC"

Demographic of survey respondents

Location

59.2% of respondents identified as being from South Wales, with **16.7%** coming from Mid and West Wales and **24.1%** from North Wales.