

# Brexit Briefing



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Wales



Happy new year! This is the sixth edition of the Brexit Briefing, we hope you enjoy. Much more information about all of these issues can be found on the [Brexit Section of our website](#).

There are three parts to the Briefing:

- 1) Summing up in the Senedd (Assembly)
- 2) News from the Imperial Capital (Westminster)
- 3) From the European Parliament (Europe)

If you have any feedback let us know by emailing [post@plaid.cymru](mailto:post@plaid.cymru).

## Summing up in the Senedd

By our Assembly Brexit Spokesman Steffan Lewis AM and the Assembly Team



[This week, the split between Welsh Labour and their Westminster colleagues grew as they voted in favour of Plaid Cymru's amendment calling on the Welsh Government to support full and unfettered access to the European Single Market, through membership of the EEA and/or EFTA.](#) This is a significant departure from Jeremy Corbyn's position and marks a shift in Welsh Labour's view in recent weeks. Plaid Cymru has been clear since the referendum vote, the single market is essential for Welsh businesses. We have the highest proportion of exports going to the EU of any UK nation and it could

do huge damage if our ability to export to the EU was hampered by tariff or regulatory barriers. Continued participation through EEA and/or EFTA membership is essential to protect Wales' economy post-Brexit.

Plaid Cymru Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education, Llyr Gruffydd AM, led a debate in the National Assembly for Wales to highlight the importance of the European Union to Wales's higher education sector. Wales's higher education sector received €140m from the EU's framework programme during the 2007-2013 round, and Welsh Universities received around £180m of capital funding from the European Investment Bank between 2011 and 2016. Llyr Gruffydd set out a 5 point plan to support Welsh universities following Brexit:

1. Protect existing EU programmes and funding for research and higher education or provide replacement programmes and funding.
2. Ensure that Welsh universities continue to participate in the Erasmus+ staff and student exchange programme, and support greater international cooperation and exchange in terms of students, researchers and staff.
3. Ensure the visa status and citizenships for EU citizens working in Welsh universities.
4. Enable Welsh universities to take part in a post-study work visa plan.
5. Remove international students from the UK's net migration targets.

There must be a Brexit deal that enables Wales to continue to attract students from across the globe and enable our universities to secure key funding. Westminster must not be a barrier between Wales and the world.

Steffan Lewis AM [reiterated calls for a Welsh visa system](#) following the publication of a report by the Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration. The report called on the UK government to consider devolving some immigration control. That could involve Wales being able to set its own visas and migration quotas, following the example of Canada where the regional governments are allowed to set region-specific requirements for immigration. Steffan Lewis said, 'Plaid Cymru has long advocated a Welsh visa system to boost our public services such as the NHS and support the private sector in attracting high-skilled workers from around the world.' He also called for student visas to be devolved, saying, 'it is of great regret that Westminster policies have damaged our reputation as a destination for international students'.

Steffan Lewis has also argued that [Wales should have the same power to challenge Acts passed by the Westminster Parliament as the UK Government has to challenge Welsh law in the Supreme Court](#). He warned that following the return of powers over devolved areas after Brexit, an 'emboldened' and 'increasingly dangerous' Westminster establishment could end up legislating unilaterally over issues that fall wholly or partially within devolved policy areas. He called for new constitutional checks and balances to rebalance the nations of the UK and make it a family of equal nations.

## News from the Imperial Capital

by Plaid Cymru's Brexit Spokesman in Westminster Jonathan Edwards MP and the Westminster Team



The Supreme Court's ruling on whether or not the UK Government must consult the UK Parliament and potentially the national Parliaments before triggering Article 50 is due imminently, and [according to the Guardian](#) the Government expects to lose that vote.

Cymru MPs have all said that the UK Government must outline its position on continued membership of the single market and the customs union before Parliament is asked to vote. [Jonathan made this point in his first intervention of 2017.](#)

Jonathan has also been working hard as Wales' voice on the House of Commons' Brexit Select Committee and getting the agreement of other members on this particular point has been his priority. Watch this space.

Just before Christmas [Hywel Williams called on the UK Government to honour the promise made by Brexiteers that the EU's research funding streams will be replaced, and commit to ensure Universities do not lose a penny after Brexit.](#)

He raised concerns that the UK Government's failure to provide certainty for the future of science and research funding is threatening the future of Welsh education and science.

Identified research funding to Wales suggests that Welsh institutions received some €183.4m in total between 2002 and 2013 and a further €29m from lifelong learning funds, including Erasmus, over the 2007-13 period.

Liz Saville Roberts – our Farming and Rural Affairs spokesperson – [warned that Welsh farmers face, what she called, a 'Brexistential threat' to their livelihoods if Westminster's Rural Affairs Secretary, Andrea Leadsom, takes control of EU agriculture policy.](#)

She made the warning as the Rural Affairs Secretary announced that she will scrap the so-called “three crop rule” that requires farmers to grow three different types of crops to protect wildlife, accusing her of focusing her post-Brexit agricultural policy on doing favours for large scale crop farmers while ignoring the grave concerns of exporters and farmers who depend on EU subsidies.

According to [a report published earlier this month](#) (Wednesday 4th January) by Westminster’s Environmental Audit Committee, sheep exports could face in excess of 30% tariffs and beef 50% if the British State is dragged out of the single market.

Liz called on Westminster to honour Brexiteer promises that farm subsidies will be plugged post-Brexit. Payments to farmers through Europe’s Common Agriculture Policy account for 80% of farm incomes in Wales and supports 16,000 farmers.

### **Prospects**

The next few weeks look set to be pivotal in shaping the future prospects of our country. We are expecting the decision of the Supreme Court imminently and the Government’s plan shortly after that.

The Brexit Select Committee, on which Jonathan sits as Wales’ only member, will publish its report in the next few days and our team in Westminster continues to work with our colleagues in the Assembly and in Europe to ensure Wales’ voice is heard and Wales’ interests are represented.

Follow [@JonathanPlaid](#) and [@Plaid Cymru](#) on Twitter to keep up to date with the Parliamentary Group’s work on Brexit.

### **From the European Parliament**

by Jill Evans MEP & the Plaid Cymru Europe Team



### EU Negotiating Team

EU chief negotiator on Brexit, Michael Barnier, has appointed a task force of thirty people to coordinate the EU's position. The task force is likely to double in size when formal negotiations begin. It includes financial services and budgets experts and the deputy diplomatic adviser is a top French civil servant.

### Europass and Erasmus

All the European Parliament's Committees are now compiling their reports on the impact of the UK's withdrawal on their current work. For the Culture Committee, on which Jill sits, it is the current revision of the Europass scheme which is likely to be concluded before the end of this year. Europass makes it easier to work and study in other EU countries by listing skills and qualifications. One item is languages, and Jill succeeded in getting Welsh included when the scheme was first launched. Jill is following this revision for the Greens/EFA Group. At the moment Europass is open to acceding states and EEA countries, as well as candidate countries. It will be particularly important to young people in Wales that we continue membership of Europass as well as Erasmus+ which provides financial support to young people who wish to study, work and gain experience in other EU countries.

### **Article 50: A Constitutionalist Reading**

The European Institute has published a report on Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union by Professor Piet Eeckhout, Academic Director of the European Institute, and Dr Eleni Frantziou, Lecturer in the Faculty of Laws at the University of Westminster. They argue that British withdrawal from the EU will need to be fully compliant with EU constitutional law, and that this will have important consequences, including:

- The Court of Justice of the EU will maintain the right to review and oversee the process of British withdrawal.
- Making EU citizens leave the UK may breach the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, leaving the UK open to litigation.
- The use of citizens as 'bargaining chips' is also contrary to both the Charter and the Convention.
- It is not adequate for the British Parliament to get its say at the end of the negotiating process on any deal reached, since the only alternative to the one negotiated by the government will be no deal at all. Parliament needs to be involved throughout the process.
- It is possible to lay down the terms for both the UK's withdrawal and for the future relationship with the EU in a single agreement.
- Although Article 50 is seen as irreversible, the EU would have a duty to act upon any *bona fide* decision to remain in the EU.