

The UK Joint Committee on Women

A Feminist History of the UK's Four Nation Representation in Europe
and Reflections on its Future

by Dr Paul Copeland and Dr Rachel Minto



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The UK Joint Committee on Women (UKJCW) was established to coordinate the UK's representation to the European Women's Lobby (EWL) – the principal women's civil society organisation in the European Union (EU), founded in 1990.

Crucially, the UKJCW is underpinned by a quasi-federal, partnership of equals between four sister organisations in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. This model of intra-UK working was remarkable in its innovation, established as it was against a backdrop of highly centralised interest representation.

This document charts the history of this ground-breaking feminist coordination, pieced together through the stories shared by the women who created and sustained the UKJCW, from the late 1980s to the present.

Dedicated to all the women who have worked to advance women's rights and gender equality across Europe.

Forever in solidarity.

By Paul Copeland and Rachel Minto

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The information used to develop this document was collected through stories shared in a workshop hosted by the authors in Cardiff on 9 June 2022. The workshop gathered together 13 women involved in the UKJCW from the late 1980s to today, with further information collected through 11 interviews and numerous personal exchanges from 2018 to 2023. The workshop participants were Ivy Cameron, Margaret Clark, Catherine Fookes, Bronagh Hinds, Liz Law, Annette Lawson, Caroline McCamley, Jonna Monaghan, Alys Mumford (online), Mary Slater, Gwendolyn Sterk, Gabrielle Suff and Lesley Sutherland, and with additional contributions from Emma Johnston, Mhairi McGowan, Jane Grant and other anonymous interviewees.

The front cover and timeline were illustrated by Dominique Brouwers

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Along with the workshop participants, we wish to acknowledge and celebrate the work of Emma Ritch, who was Executive Director of Engender when she tragically passed away on 9 July 2021.

In memory of Emma Ritch

By Gwendolyn Sterk

Emma Ritch was a passionate and integral part of the UKJCW from March 2010 until her untimely death in July 2021. She was the UK board member for EWL from June 2018 - June 2021. Emma was a hugely influential member of the UKJCW and in her engagement with EWL. She was particularly influential on the 'Women and Economy' working group for the EWL, where she shared her expertise on gender budgeting to the benefit of activists from across Europe.

Emma was Executive Director for Engender from 2013. During her time there she was integral to ensuring Scottish women's rights activism was influential throughout UK, Europe and wider international stage. Along with colleagues from the UKJCW, Emma gave evidence to the UN on the implementation of CEDAW (a treaty she was passionate about realising) in the UK, ensuring Scotland had a strong and effectual voice. Emma was instrumental in advocating for the Scottish Government's commitment to incorporating CEDAW into Scot's Law.

Emma's passion for realising women's rights is evident in the number of organisations and partnerships she participated in, including being Chair of Rape Crisis Scotland from 2016-2021, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the board of the Human Rights Consortium Scotland in 2020 and a member of the YWCA board, as well as having previously been a project manager for Close the Gap Scotland.

Her incredible knowledge, commitment and collaborative approach gave momentum to UKJCW and she embodied the UKJCW ethos of shared learning and collective working. She had an amazing ability to bring people together on a contentious issue and diplomatically find the right path forward for the benefit of women across all nations of the UK. She was often on the end of the phone or a skype to share her knowledge with great generosity to fellow UKJCW members. She also had immense curiosity and interest in what others were doing to enable women's rights. She will be remembered as an integral part of UKJCW and EWL 'herstory' and her legacy will live on for future generations.

A Note from the Authors

The women's movement was built by volunteers. These are women who have given their time, energy, expertise and creativity to advancing women's rights and gender equality. They have imagined a better world and have worked tirelessly to achieve their aim. The stories of these women – and the organisations they create – are often lost. Rarely enjoying significant media or political attention, and without fully archived documentation, our understanding of their work is at best patchy and fades with the passing of time. It was our desire that the particular story (or set of stories) about the UK Joint Committee of Women (UKJCW) and its four constituent organisations did not vanish. Instead, we wish to ensure that they are captured, appropriately acknowledged and stored safely for the future. Elizabeth Law from the Women's Platform in Northern Ireland planted the seed of this idea. In passing, she spoke to us about her dream of gathering the UKJCW family together in a cottage for the weekend, to talk through and record the history of the UKJCW.

The UKJCW was formed in 1990 to coordinate the UK's representation to the European Women's Lobby – the principal women's civil society organisation in the European Union (EU). Despite the Covid-19 pandemic and maternity leave, we eventually gathered together (over two years later than planned and in a far less romantic setting than a country cottage) and what an extraordinary day it was! As feminist researchers, it was a privilege for us to spend time listening to the women who were responsible for both creating and sustaining the UK's coordination to the European Women's Lobby for more than 30 years, including those women who are taking it into its next chapter following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. These stories complemented the already rich accounts and reflections gathered through a number of individual interviews. We are grateful for the time that all of these women gave to share their experiences of the UKJCW – the highs and lows and everything in between. This text is our interpretation of the stories shared.

Whilst we haven't been able to include everything from our interviews or conversations, we hope that through our contribution here we have done some justice to the inspirational women who built and maintained the UKJCW – through the feminist organisations in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – and also the EWL. Where possible we have used the women's own words from both the workshop and preceding interviews. Unsurprisingly with oral histories, there was not always agreement between those involved. We have sought to draw out the sometimes competing narratives, which reflect different stand-points, priorities and experiences. Although this is not 'our story', we take full responsibility for the contents and presentation of this text.

This is the story of feminist warriors! These women have toiled and hustled – whilst sleeping on each other's beds (or floors!) and scraping together money to attend meetings, in less than glamorous circumstances and in the days of slow communications. They worked seamlessly across multiple levels of governance – whilst holding down full- or part-time jobs, or bouncing a baby on their knee – to ensure that the voices of women from across the UK's four nations were heard at the European level.

May this document ensure that the travails of these women are not lost. May it be enjoyed now and, in the future, with the dust shaken off by feminists and allies, and with further iterations and chapters added in the years to come.

We hope that you enjoy this feminist story.

Paul Copeland and Rachel Minto

A Note about our Sponsor: The James Madison Charitable Trust

This project has been generously funded by the James Madison Charitable Trust (JMCT). The JMCT was established by John Pinder in 2000 to support and promote the studies of federal government whether within or among states, including studies of processes that may lead towards the establishment of such government, and to support or promote education and dissemination of knowledge of these subjects.

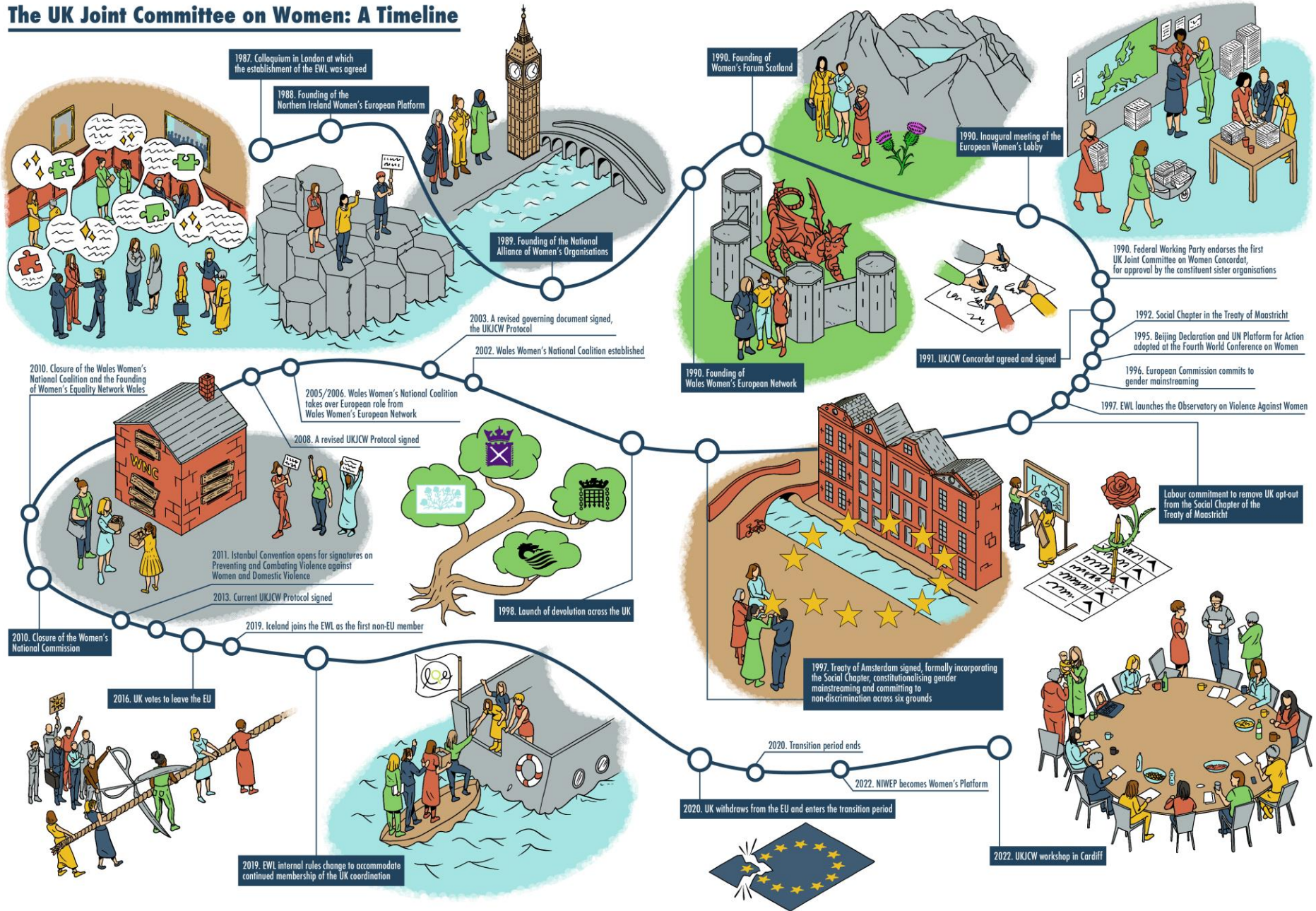
The Trust is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. John Pinder's original intention was that it should have a relatively short life of ten years as the capital he gifted was used and run down to achieve the objectives set out above. It has lasted much longer and The Trust was relaunched in 2015. If you would like to support the work of the James Madison Charitable Trust or to hear more about their work, please go to:

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the 12 women who journeyed to Cardiff to take part in the June 2022 workshop as well as the individual who participated online, those who participated in the preceding interviews and those who provided additional information and clarifications following the workshop. Thanks also to the James Madison Charitable Trust without whose financial support this gathering of feminists from across the four nations of the UK would not have been possible. We also benefited from conversations with Prof. Dan Wincott from the Wales Governance Centre (WGC) at Cardiff University about the significance of recording feminist histories – diolch yn fawr iawn, Dan – and from the WGC more broadly as the host for a seminar on our UKJCW research in February 2021.

The UK Joint Committee on Women: A Timeline



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Introduction

The story of the UKJCW is a story about the women's movement and its intersection with organised civil society; although to talk of "the women's movement" is perhaps misleading, as it is the differentiation between the feminist activism and gender equality governance in the four nations that is particularly striking and that characterises the UKJCW. The journey to establish and then maintain a four nations representation has not been straightforward. Far from it. When we asked those involved what word they would use to describe the journey of the UKJCW, responses included "bumpy", "wobbly" and "troubled" to "iterative" and "complex". This text provides an explanation for the provenance of these adjectives as it sets out the contestation that beset, in particular, the early days of four nations working.

"What word would you use to describe the journey of the UKJCW?"

- Wobbly / bumpy / bumpy / troubled / convoluted
- Fascinating / inspiring / rewarding / radical
- Ground-breaking
- Complex / iterative / negotiated
- Rewarding
- Resilient
- Peaks and troughs
- Unifying
- Effective

"What word would you use to describe the UKJCW today?"

- Essential / essential / vital / vital / necessary / necessary / necessary / important
- Indomitable / resilient
- Developing / clarifying
- Confused
- Challenge / protect / expand
- Un-diverse
- Challenged (uncertainty)

One of the reasons for the contestation is that these women were breaking new ground in coming together on a partnership of equals basis. The four nations model was both innovative and radical and, importantly, has supported the development of other cross-national configurations. Political devolution further entrenched the necessity for such distinct national bodies to inform the UK's representation to the EWL; whilst Brexit has altogether reconfigured the constitutional backdrop for both devolution and relationships with the EU. As such, there are two key themes in this report. The first is an exploration of how this partnership model of working – which affords equal presence and status to sister organisations from each of the four nations of the UK – was established and sustained, including the good, the bad and the at times challenging reality of intra-UK working. The second is the significance of the UK's EU membership to the UKJCW, its constituent organisations and, in turn, gender equality governance. We aim to explore these different dimensions in this text.

To begin, chapter 1 introduces the European Women's Lobby, providing a brief overview of its establishment, in a bid to contextualise the following story of the UKJCW. Chapter 2 then sets out the history of the creation and evolution of the UKJCW over its 30+ years in existence. This is followed in chapter 3 with a focus on the development and designation of the four constituent women's organisations, largely collected through supplementary interviews and personal exchanges with key individuals outside our June 2022 meeting in Cardiff. In chapter 4, we share information about the functioning of the UKJCW and reflections on its key achievements over the years. Chapter 5 then explores some of the challenges of four nations working, as experienced by the different women and organisations comprising the UKJCW. The next two chapters focus on the significance of EWL membership for the UKJCW (chapter 6) and vice versa (chapter 7). In turn, these chapters complement the reflections in chapter 8 on the significance of Brexit. The final chapter (chapter 9) presents the key themes of the closing exchange at our workshop, which considered the future of the UKJCW and agreed an action plan to support the development of the UKJCW over the coming years. We were invited to discuss some of the key themes from this chapter with members of the UKJCW at one of their meetings, in September 2022 (attended by Rachel Minto).

Of course, every story is subjective and this one is no different. We have sought to explore the themes thoroughly, thoughtfully and objectively. As researchers, we have a particular interest in the politics and governance of a decentralised UK – acknowledging that the UK is a union of distinct nations – and we share a deep-seated commitment to women's rights and gender equality. As such, these informed the focus of our work. When drafting this document, where possible, we have tried to keep the voices of the women who participated in both the workshop and our interviews so that the reader can hear these women speak through the text. We have not named individuals, although it may be possible, on occasion, to identify those speaking through piecing together different fragments of information. We hope that the transcript of the workshop will be made available, to be appended to this text in due course.

For us as feminist researchers, this document serves as a punctuation mark in a longer piece of work. We will be using the information presented here to explore the academic concepts of Europeanisation and Regionalisation, and their shape and significance in women's civil society both pre- and post-Brexit. We also hope in time to provide a fuller and more contextualised account of the development of the feminist civil society organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with particular reference to political devolution.

1 Lobbying for Women in Europe

The inaugural meeting of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) was held in September 1990. This followed a decision taken at a colloquium, held in London in November 1987, that was organised by a key figure within the European Commission's Women's Information Service, Fausta Deshormes, and the Fawcett Society. 120 women members of 85 civil society organisations were invited,¹ most of whom were from more 'traditional' women's organisations as opposed to more radical feminist organisations (Hoskyns 1991).² The founding members included organisations from the 12 Member States of the European Community (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK), and 17 existing European women's organisations, such as Business and Professional Women (BPW) Europe and Soroptimist International Europe.

The centrality of the European Commission in the early days of the UKJCW and the EWL need to be acknowledged, as it pursued its preference for a single and more professional body to act as a key interlocutor on women's interests.³ However, as even early accounts emphasised, the benefits of this European mobilisation had significance not only in terms of EU-level representation in decision-making, but also for the exchange of information and the development of transnational campaigns.⁴

Such is the continued status of the EWL that it still enjoys financial support from the European Commission, e.g. in 2021, over 70% of the EWL's budget and a further large grant came from the Commission. Whilst funding for civil society organisations continues to be a key challenge, it is notable that the Lobby maintains a Brussels-based Secretariat with permanent staff, including a Secretary General, policy and campaigns officers and support staff. Article 1 of the EWL Statutes⁵ designates that the EWL can work across the range of EU policy-making although in practice it is more active and visible in some areas, e.g. women's representation, employment and gender-based violence. Its Work Programme – approved by the members – serves as the key document that directs the work of the Secretariat. It has also established a number of thematic Working Groups, which complement the long-established Observatory on

¹ Strid, S. (2009) 'Gendered Interests in the European Union: The European Women's Lobby and the Organisation and Representation of Women's Interests', doctoral dissertation (Årebro University: Årebro Studies in Gender Research 1), p.139.

² Hoskyns, C. (1992) 'The European Women's Lobby', *Feminist Review*, 38: 67-70.

³ Strid (2009), 'Gendered Interests in the European Union', pp.138-9.

⁴ Hoskyns (1991) 'The European Women's Lobby', p.68.

⁵ European Women's Lobby (2013) European Women's Lobby Statutes, Adopted by the 2013 General Assembly, available here: https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/ewl_statutes_adopted_2013_en_pour_web.pdf.

Violence Against Women (which brings together national experts on gender-based violence), which the EWL has hosted since 1997.

The EWL's legitimacy is derived from its members. They are predominantly national (from EU [and now former EU] Member States, accession countries and European Economic Area [EEA] member states) but also include European-level associations. National representation within the EWL is organised through national co-ordinations, with the Icelandic coordination joining in 2019 as the first member from the EEA and the UK becoming the first coordination from a former EU Member State in 2020. Relatedly, one point that was touched upon in the workshop but not explored in depth was the future of the EWL itself, particularly in light of its management of an increasingly diverse membership from predominantly EU- but also non-EU Member States. Within the agreed membership criteria, the nature of these national co-ordinations varies in terms of size and resource, with some national co-ordinations specifically established in order to ensure national representation within the EWL, e.g. the Swedish Women's Lobby⁶ as well as the UKJCW. A criterion of these national organisations was that they had to comprise a network of member organisations as opposed to consisting of individuals members. In addition, and in the spirit of enabling the participation of more grassroots organisations, there was no fee attached to membership. These requirements, of course, shaped the representations that were designation and developed across Europe.

A key theme throughout the workshop was that the UKJCW was established – and has in part evolved – in function of the EWL. As such, the requirements attached to EWL membership were reflected in the form and functioning of the UK's representation. As a complement to this, women from across the UK have at various points held senior positions through the EWL Executive and have made notable contributions, both to its initial shape and onwards work and development.

⁶ Strid (2009), 'Gendered Interests in the European Union', pp.162-3.

2 Establishing the UK's Representation

Challenging the conventional centralised model

"... that achievement of getting agreement that the UK representation would be four discrete organisations representing four constituent parts of the United Kingdom was indeed groundbreaking and it was extremely innovative, it was extremely radical..."

"And because we were Celts, because we represented small nations ... I think we made some progress in a way that with a normal 'colonial' [London-centric, all-UK] approach would not have worked at all."

As activity to establish the EWL progressed, so too did activity to establish the UK's representation to it. The model ultimately adopted in the UK was not predetermined. That it took the form of a quasi-federal 'partnership of equals' structure was down to the persistent lobbying of women from Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The efforts of these individuals were focused at once within the UK and at the EU-level.

Within the UK itself, the decisions around the UK's representation to the emergent EWL were at times mired in conflict and contention. From the perspective of those based in London, it was perhaps an understandable assumption that they would hold the responsibility to represent the UK in its entirety. These women/organisations predominantly organised their activity around Westminster as the government of the UK, and a centralised UK-wide approach was the dominant model of interest representation at the time (and often remains so today). Furthermore, although the EU has developed an infrastructure for the representation of sub-state ('Regional') interests, it is the nation states which are the Member States – and with this has come a certain reluctance in the EU to meddle below the level of the state. As one interviewee reflected,

"Europe isn't interested in whether you're from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. They are interested if you're from England because Westminster is the main government..."

It was with this assumption in mind that there were moves in London to provide an all-UK representation to the nascent EWL. As a London-based, UK-wide organisation, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) prepared itself to take on this role. There was also a recollection amongst participants that the Women's Committee of the UK's national civil society coordination (the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, NCVO) was also positioning itself to act as the UK's representation to the EWL.

Although prior to political devolution, there were already distinct gender equality agendas and organisations across the nations of the UK, reflecting inter alia different cultures, priorities and policy preferences. In turn, feminists from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were insistent upon asserting their distinctiveness in the UK's representation to the EWL, arguing that a conventional, London-centric, UK-wide model was wholly unfit for purpose. As such, NCVO's 'breakaway committee' and NAWO's UK-wide representation were challenged from a territorial perspective. In the words of one participant:

"... we said in Northern Ireland, 'That cannot be.' We were entitled to sit on the executive meetings of the NCVO so I started to go to those meetings as a sister organisation... [and] we started challenging this issue..."

"It took us over a year. There was a lot of resistance in England to it because a lot of work had already been done to write the statutes of NAWO and we were asking them to change those statutes. We wanted the NAWO name changed. We did not want it to be the national alliance because when NAWO conceived that, they saw national being the UK national. And we said, 'No, it cannot be.' So, they made some changes to restrict the agreement to England, but they made the case that there were a lot of [UK] national organisations that were going to be part of NAWO and they wanted to keep the national in the title, so it is a bit of compromise. So, in everything, compromises..."

After much tension and contention in different forums and involving a variety of individuals, an understanding was reached within the UK that the UK's representation had to be based on a four nation, partnership approach.

"... it had to be negotiated and that was sometimes very difficult. People were coming at us with quite different perspectives. I know that our sisters in England, some of them found it really... they could not quite understand what we were driving at. They could not see there was an issue, so I give credit to them when people began to understand why we were pushing so hard for this and we came to an agreement."

"... And honestly, it was very, very, very difficult and we were very determined. It was a very difficult battle, but to give people their due, we actually moved into a coequal partnership, which I think is incredibly important..."

There was notable disagreement about the level of acceptance of this four nations model. On the one hand, many participants reflected that the initial, in principle agreement of a four nations structure did not settle the issue of four nations working.

"It was an iterative process at the outset because, to be honest, sometimes we had to keep on going back to people and saying, 'No. In England, you cannot say that you are representing all of us. We have to get that power to be seen,'..."

On the other, there was recollection that London-based feminists were indeed welcoming of a four nations approach and that the level of tension at this time was not acutely felt by all.

This was only stage one of the process of securing a four nations representation to the EWL, with this learning and lobbying complemented with an equally crucial negotiation at the EU-level, with the EWL.

The structure of member representation originally foreseen in the EWL afforded each nation (state) a three-seat delegation. Of course, for those advocating a four-nation approach in the UK, they would be left one seat short. As such, lobbying was focused on securing four seats for each delegation with UK-based feminists clear that in order to secure a representative presence from the UK, four seats were essential.

There was an awareness of the wider considerations at an EU-level when it came to making such territorially based decisions.

"... I think we also understood that for Europe, for the European Union and the Commission this was dangerous territory because what do you have next, the Belgians wanting another three seats and the Spaniards wanting God knows how many and the Italians?"

However, feminists from the UK continued to insist, with a key part of the argument advanced to the EWL focusing on the special case of Northern Ireland. At the time, the conflict in Northern Ireland was ongoing, with sectarian unrest and violence causing loss of life and destruction. Particularly prior to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement in 1998 and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1999, the EU provided an invaluable, neutral meeting place for representatives from Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK.

"We were making a very strong argument that was balanced around, 'This is a different situation'. But we were very clear that it had to be this way, and that it also had to be this way in order for the north/south, east/west piece to develop and evolve."

As such, the delegation from the Republic of Ireland was also in favour of this four-seat model.

"... I do remember one of the funny things was a lot of the Europeans, other Europeans were really astonished that we [the Irish] were supporting, we were part of the demand that the UK delegation had to be four-way. Their sense of what was going on in Ireland was we were all killing each other, and so the idea that the southerners would support anything that the UK delegation wanted seemed to be a bit... they were a bit nervous of that."

"It was absolutely central that Northern Irish women didn't feel that they couldn't be represented or wouldn't be represented by an English, London-based organisation, and equally the other half of the women in Northern Ireland would feel that maybe in some way we [the Irish delegation] were trying to represent them. It just had to be the way we insisted it had to be. We were very happy to support everybody to get that."

It was through this successful lobbying that the EWL's initial structure afforded each delegation four seats, with each of the four nations in the UK therefore enjoying its own

distinctive and direct affiliation with the EWL through their own territorial organisation. Therefore, the UKJCW as it was first manifest served as a mechanism by which this four-seat delegation chose its (one) EWL Board Member (see chapter 4 for more on governance arrangements). Securing a four seat, partnership of equals model was both a substantively significant and a highly symbolic victory for feminist activists from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It was seen as a necessary first step for the adequate representation of women across the UK – in recognition of the territorially distinct experiences, contexts and gender equality agendas – and also served as a structure to support five nations working.

In the wider context of interest representation in Europe, the four-seat model was exemplary in modelling a more innovative approach.

“So we definitely, from the UK Joint Committee, we gave the EWL a different model of participation, a certain level of diversity that they didn't have at that point...”

Indeed, looking across the 12 Member States, the UKJCW offered something new.

“[At first] they were talking about having three [seats]... they had conceived it as an organisation and maybe then being represented by three people and we said, ‘No. No. This will not work,’ and we negotiated the extension of it to four and when they saw what we were doing – as opposed to other people which were just running [the coordination] from some elite centralised organisations – and they saw that we were actually trying to diversify right across the UK, and each of us had our networks that were reaching into communities, they could not believe that could be done. Because of that push to get anything pan-European going... they were just being pragmatic and we are going, ‘No. No. We are going to be principled about this and deliver something which is more than what is anticipated and that can... and there were tensions all along the way.”

When the pieces of the puzzle finally came together the UKJCW's first governing document (the UKJCW Concordat, which later developed into the UKJCW Protocol) was drafted, discussed, debated and agreed between the four participating organisations: National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, Wales Women's European Network and Women's Forum Scotland... and so the UKJCW was born!

Communication to Women's Forum Scotland from the chairs to request consideration of the first UK Joint Committee on Women Concordat, September 1991

UK JOINT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN - REPORT TO WOMEN'S FORUM SCOTLAND

The UK Joint Committee on Women developed from the Federal Working Party. At the time that the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) was being established there was much discussion on how the constituent parts of the UK should be represented. The argument for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also to have umbrella bodies and that they should work towards some form of federal arrangement was agreed and therefore not only NAWO, but also the Women's Forum Scotland, the Wales Women's Euro Network and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform were set up. These four umbrella organisations, while being fundamentally similar in organisation and aims, have slight variations reflecting their different situations and requirements. The four UK representatives to the European Women's Lobby are elected respectively by each of these organisations.

The practices and concepts worked through by the Federal Working Party were drafted into a Concordat, which is presented for the WFS to endorse, and the title UK Joint Committee on Women was adopted. The Concordat sets out the parameters of its operation.

At the meeting prior to the inaugural general Assembly of the EWL, agreement was reached on the Bureau nominations and general standpoint. Subsequent to the General Assembly there have been two meetings of the UK Joint Working Party. Each umbrella organisation (or co-ordination in the European parlance) is represented by the EWL representative and the Chair of the respective co-ordinations. In addition Jane Grant, Director of NAWO has attended meetings. One meeting took place in London and one in Cardiff as it was felt important that the opportunity should be taken to rotate meetings. While this principle is important, it does entail logistical problems and costs both time and money. The date of the next meeting is provisionally set for 7 November in London.

The meetings allow exchange of information on the four co-ordinations priorities, policies, events, as well as affording the opportunity to discuss the European dimension and share views at a UK level. It is hoped that in the forthcoming year there will be more opportunity to communicate this exchange to the WFS membership.

Lesley Sutherland
Karen Willey

September 1991

There was a broad feeling that the early days of the UKJCW were largely consumed with establishing the fledging EWL and institutionalising patterns of working between the four sister organisations in the UK. However, attention to processes, structures and procedures has continued to be a constant feature of UKJCW activity over time and a recurring theme in discussions at the workshop.

"At the outset it was all about setting it [the UKJCW] up, and also remember, how did we communicate with each other? For those that weren't at the General Assembly, let's say, someone would have to do a report... so you would write a report and that would get circulated... and mailed at the post office... how else was it going to get there? And you might have a phone call or whatever. And so it was much less easy to just communicate, just to share information then."

"So, my observation is that on the journey, it was a very developmental process for the four. That you went from perhaps not having an awful lot of interaction to suddenly having lots and lots of interaction to the point where you were able to come to an agreement as to how you were going to proceed, so that was really important."

The continued focus on maintaining the form and spirit of four nations working together was institutionalised in such a way that it was able to withstand a change in EWL membership rules. This change saw the abolition of the four-seat delegation; to be replaced by three seat delegation run through a single national coordination. However, despite this change, the UKJCW continued to function as a four nations structure.

This amendment to EWL rules brought representation in line with the EU's standard approach which is to engage predominantly at the level of the Member State. For the constituent organisations of the UKJCW, the new rules meant that they would begin to speak on behalf of the UKJCW as a whole. However, by this time, even NAWO – an organisation that had been more resistant to four nations working – had become more accustomed to working in partnership across four nations.

"... it was beneficial to hear and learn about the work particularly from other areas and where we, in NAWO, needed to get our act together too, and be participating as real partners and equals, especially if you were then going to be going to EWL and you were not just talking about your own organisation. In fact, we had to ask them to change the name cards often. So you'd arrive and it would be '[Whoever], NAWO,' and you'd have say, "Actually, sorry, but you need to put UKJCW," and then you'd have to explain to everybody why!"

The EWL's motivation for changing its membership rules was a pragmatic one, as the EU was preparing for the accession of 10 Member States in 2004. This governance change did not reflect any (articulated or visible) desire to undermine the UK's four nations approach or to bring representation in line with a more centralised model of interest representation.

"I think it was purely about cost ... I think it was part of the expansion process that we had to cut down our seats."

In function of this EU-level change, the UKJCW agreed their own ways of working based on the principle of four nations working (please see discussion in chapter 4). One recurring reflection in the workshop about the work of the UKJCW was the contribution it made to intra-UK working more broadly. The journey of the UKJCW – as one that was developmental and iterative – was stressed as of particular significance as providing proof of concept.

“I think that the UK Joint committee, under partnership, we evolved [and] created the capacity to do partnerships and move into other areas... I think we were the forerunners of that and made and created in a more formal way those relationships, and other women got involved with each other's organisations and made the connections and that made other things possible. So I think that in fact that was the added value of it, which I think was important.”

The interaction between the now four women's budget groups (following the recent establishment of the women's budget group in Wales) provides a subsequent example of feminist organisations working in partnership. Another example provided after the workshop was that of the UK Civil Society Women's Alliance, with the Terms of Reference of the Core Group including the representation of the devolved nations in order to insure a four nations approach.

The nature of the UKJCW partnership and the status of the subsequent structure that was created ran as an underpinning theme of the workshop. For most, the UKJCW was seen 'simply' as a structure to facilitate coordination between four distinct organisations, as opposed to an entity in its own right, with a role to represent and advocate common positions. The UKJCW did not enjoy any funding as a distinct entity (although there was some query about £500 from the European Commission) and had no Bank account.

“For me, the UKJCW was there to manage and regulate, if you like, the relationships between the four organisations and to enable that participation in the Women's European Lobby and so on. The committee was not of itself a body to campaign or whatever; it was a means of the organisations going about their business and coordinating on UK business and so on.”

For some, this coordinating role was seen to eclipse the UKJCW's substantive *raison d'être*, as there was at times a loss in focus on the purpose of the UKJCW as the promotion of women's rights and gender equality through women's representation.

“I experienced UKJCW as not really certain where it was going, what was its actual function, what was our actual function, what were we trying to do besides from the four of us sitting around the table as four nations, which was always important, and quite honestly, it was often tense.”

With another participant remarking,

“We would spend more time on who was going to represent us sometimes!”

It is perhaps unsurprising that the innovative four nations structure embodied by the UKJCW required careful tending over time. It is worth stressing that it has indeed successfully fulfilled the role of coordinating the UK's representation to the European Women's Lobby for well over 30 years. During this time, its function has had to shift: from essentially coordinating the selection of the UK's Board member (when there was originally a four seat delegation) to becoming *the* national coordination (when EWL membership rules changed in advance of the EU's 2004 enlargement). The extent to which the UKJCW itself is an operational structure that sits above the actual mission and work undertaken by its constituent organisations – as opposed to a distinct entity that ought to be visible and to advocate in its own right – was a recurring theme in the workshop. It is revisited in particular in the final chapter (chapter 9) which focuses on the workshop discussions about future of the UKJCW.

3 Designating the Four Sister Organisations

Contestation within and beyond Nations

Just as the ‘how?’ of the UK’s representation to the EWL was not guaranteed, neither was the ‘who?’. The founding statutes of the European Women’s Lobby stated that its members must themselves be a network of women’s organisations; a criterion that has remained in place (today found in the EWL Statutes, 2013, Title II, Article 5, paragraph 1). Of course, this put constraints on the types of organisations that were able to take on the EWL role, which in turn fed into debates in the four nations. The wrangling that took place ‘at home’ reflected the organisation of the women’s movement and the politics therein, as well as their level of interest in Europe. Whilst the designation of the four ‘home’ organisations all took place prior to the launch of political devolution in the late 1990s, it was during a period of heightened mobilisation around devolution in Scotland and Wales, and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland.

3.1. England: National Alliance of Women’s Organisations

The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (NAWO) was established in 1989, although not specifically to meet the requirements of the UK’s representation to the European Women’s Lobby. NAWO arose out of the NCVO-facilitated Women’s Organisations Interest Group (WOIG), although WOIG was actually disbanded before the establishment of NAWO. With the support (including financial) of NCVO, NAWO was guided to independence, as a distinct grouping of women’s organisations that could no longer be serviced by NCVO. NAWO’s first appointed Director, Jane Grant, had been a staff member of NCVO and the facilitator of WOIG. Today, its work is now largely online, although it is at least nominally a London-based and certainly a UK-wide organisation, with members from across England and also some from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and including UK-wide organisations. As such, as noted above, the ‘national’ in NAWO does not refer to England but to the UK, with the government of interest to NAWO being the UK Government. From the early days of NAWO’s existence, the UK-wide reach of NAWO was a source of contestation between the emerging sister organisations of the UKJCW, with some highlighting the ‘centralising tendencies’ of NAWO. This critique has, however, diminished over time. Today, in the context of the UKJCW and devolution, NAWO engages with the three nations as partners, with this partnership approach being central to shoring up the UKJCW’s model.

Given this geographical ‘split’, NAWO has played a double-hatted role over the years: representing England within the UKJCW and the whole of UK as part of its wider work. Notably, before the abolition of the Women’s National Commission by the Conservative and Liberal-

Democrat Coalition Government in 2010 (in the ‘bonfire of the quangos’), certain representatives from NAWO had a well-established relationship with this UK-wide, umbrella organisation. Indeed, NAWO’s Chair and others participated at senior levels in the WNC. The WNC was regarded by some as being overly London-centric, with a tendency towards more ‘institutionalised’ and ‘traditional’ (as opposed to grassroots) representation. This characterisation is contested with reference to the 500 partner organisations (and some individual women) as part of the WNC at the time of its closure. Furthermore, some individuals from NAWO’s sister organisations perceived NAWO as a particularly “middle class” organisation, although this is not a characterisation recognised by NAWO itself. Representatives stress that NAWO has always sought the participation of grassroots organisations, drawn from the many areas of women’s activism and from different ethnic backgrounds, and that its Management Committee has always comprised a diverse range of individuals. In the early days of NAWO, its membership comprised some 250 organisations.

The fortunes of NAWO have dwindled over time. Indeed, many of NAWO’s original members no longer exist, especially some of the smallest organisations which were particularly impacted by the punishing austerity decisions of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government from 2010. Whilst each of the four UKJCW members have had ups and downs over the years, currently NAWO is the least well-resourced of the four sister organisations, not least because of the lack of government funding. Indeed, beyond an early setting-up grant, and some in-kind donations such as rooms and refreshments, NAWO has never been in receipt of funding from Westminster. Gradually this fact eroded NAWO’s capacity to fund travel for its representatives and resource UKJCW meetings and activities as it did when in receipt of funding (later from Trusts if not from government). Today, most work is carried out by trustees and volunteers, with any minimal available funding used also to support key individuals to take on projects as consultants. NAWO has a substantial mailing list and publishes regular social network updates and newsletters, with consultations held online.

For a number of years from about 2010, NAWO rented office space in the same building as other women’s organisations, including the Women’s Resource Centre (WRC) with whom it also shared office space. Today, given that almost all Board members are not Londoners and due to the online culture established during the Covid-19 pandemic, NAWO largely moved out of London and moved more activity online. Although meetings in Parliament and central London are now becoming more frequent again, there has certainly been a shift away from a highly centralised, in-person model of working. This shift (both by accident and by design) responded to critiques from different corners of England about the centrality of much of NAWO’s activity, including from the North and North West of England and East Anglia. One representative from the North of England was particularly vocal about the challenge of promoting “levelling up” through NAWO’s work and advocated for greater sensitivity to regionalisation within England and specifically the recognition of a distinct “Northern England”.

- NAWO: <https://nawo.org.uk/>

3.2. Northern Ireland: Women's Platform

Formerly the Northern Ireland Women's Platform

The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) was established in the late 1980s expressly for women's representation to the EU-level.

"[NIWEP was] established specifically to be the Northern Ireland bit of the UK coordination, so it was established with that purpose and with great difficulty and with great sensitivity and a great negotiation and with the absolute utmost of the feminist skills that we have across Northern Ireland."

There were two notable dimensions to establishing such an organisation in Northern Ireland. The first was the need to bridge class and sectarian divides in any representative organisation; the second was the already established culture of Northern Ireland's direct working with Brussels.

The women who spearheaded the creation of NIWEP had a determined investment in ensuring that NIWEP would be a representative organisation. They sought to bring together women from more traditional women's groups (organised through the Women's Forum) and more grassroots women's groups. The former were seen to be from more middle class backgrounds and organisations (including some more radical feminists); with the latter more working class, and funded with Peace money to undertake cross community work.

"Finding ways that neither side owned and everybody could then participate in was actually crucial to it being a genuinely potentially inclusive."

"... the grassroots women's movement from the very start, from the 70s, has been extremely important, but building the Northern Ireland and European platform was going to be challenging because historically, we had some traditional groups mainly from the unionist side of the community, church-related, etc. and either side had to be convinced to both be part of a movement, so part of this was part of our cross-community and integrating everybody into it and believe me, that was not easy. We had to do a lot of behind the scenes work to make that possible on all sides, but it was also important to us because we have to have our own self-sustaining movement because we absolutely had to work on a North-South basis and the amount of work that NIWEP and the National Women's Council of Ireland did on the Peace Process and bringing women's voices forward and getting them heard in the south, presenting for peace and reconciliation, we needed vehicles for that and we needed to actually be doing..."

The voluntary sector in Northern Ireland was very active in Europe from prior to political devolution, playing a notable role in the establishment of various European networks (including the European Women's Platform and the European Anti Poverty Network). This European dimension was key to supporting cross community working.

“It wasn’t the Northern Ireland Women’s thing. It was very specifically, as I recall, set up around the concept of being part of this European initiative, because that allowed women from all sides of the then very particular divides to have a common purpose ... that does not mean that it became instantly a happy inclusive band of sisters sitting round on their cushions. It didn’t. But it allowed always for the default position for this group to be, “We are concerned with our European dimension.” Yes, I think it was critical to maintaining through all sorts of difficult periods and times and arguments and rows about who owned what, it allowed that organisation to say, “Ah yes, but we are focused on the European dimension. We are focused on our participation in Europe, our engagement through Europe.”

NIWEP never enjoyed any government funding for its core work; although it has secured small pieces of funding through various sources (e.g. the Lottery and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) which have paid for a minimal level of support for much of the organisation’s lifetime. However, it has predominantly been a volunteer-led organisation. Today, the organisation has funding to cover some communications and membership work, under the leadership of a Director.

It recently underwent a rebranding and is now the Women’s Platform. This amendment took place following Brexit and in a bid to become a larger and more inclusive organisation for women across Northern Ireland.

“... we were looking at how can we become more accessible and increase membership, and those sort of things. So we did some work, and people said, “You’re very academic, you’re very aloof.” So it’s partly that, and as a matter of fact, more of our work is at the UN level and at European level. Because we had quite a lot of discussions about the European – you know, is it important to have there ... – we made it very clear that we think that European link continues to be very important.”

- Women’s Platform: <https://womensplatform.org/>

3.3. Scotland: Engender

Formerly Women’s Forum Scotland

Women’s Forum Scotland was established specifically to represent the interests of Scottish women in the EWL. The final decision to establish Women’s Forum Scotland was taken at a meeting in Bannockburn in June 1990. To reach this point, there had been a fairly lengthy debate on structures (particularly on the organisational membership) and ways of working, with consultation and development taking place through a series of working groups. Given that the EWL required national organisations to be membership based, ultimately the decision was taken, with widespread support, to set up the Women’s Forum Scotland.

This activity took place against a backdrop of increased mobilisation around Scottish devolution with the Scottish Constitutional Convention and the Scottish Convention of Women providing ready-made networks of actors who were supportive of Scotland's distinct representation in Europe.

“So, that informal network of church, businesswomen, trade unions, political parties, that was all there in the mix anyway because of the convention. There had been meetings around a women's claim of right, so we were all very used to meeting with each other.”

Indeed, the Scottish Convention of Women was referred to as, “the kind of midwife that gave birth to Women's Forum”. It also facilitated the subsequent establishment of Engender in the early 1990s, whose early focus was on research.

Women's Forum Scotland was run by volunteers and a Board, with occasional assistance or resource in kind from member organisations. It provided representation to the EWL for more than a decade until it was decided that it would merge with Engender (2001) with a framework which allowed the organisational identities, initially, to remain distinct.

By that time in the early 2000s, some of the civil society coalitions that had formed around the establishment of the Scottish Parliament had fragmented and whilst the Scottish Trades Union Congress continued to play a leading role in relation to the Parliament, the focus of the Trade Unions had shifted. Indeed, the campaign for a Scottish Parliament had consumed a huge amount of energy and commitment and, once established in 1999, the focus turned to how to engage with and influence the Scottish Parliament and its Executive. As such, it became more challenging to sustain the Women's Forum Scotland network. Engender, with which Women's Forum Scotland had always had close and cordial relationships, had itself evolved, also becoming a membership-based organisation, thus fulfilling the requirements of the Lobby. The merger was not an easy process.

“There was toing and froing for a long time around that constitution and eventually it was sorted.”

The devolution context was significant, not solely because of the need for a distinct organisation to represent the interests of women in Scotland but also given the institutional architecture that was developed to support Scotland's new political system.

“... we were obsessed with devolution in the first few years. We had a new civil service. We had a new government and new parliament. We had a whole new set of relationships and we had no capacity to accept volunteers at that point. We just were focused on Scotland. Then once the government and the parliament started to bed in ... we finally began to pick our heads up and look outside of Scotland again. The UK Joint Committee was a great opportunity for us to then have a mechanism for doing that.”

Today, Engender is a well-established organisation that enjoys funding from the Scottish Government. It is the most well-funded of the four organisations, with multiple staff covering

each of the policy, development and communication functions under the leadership of the Executive Director.

- Engender: <https://www.engender.org.uk/>

3.4. Wales: Women's Equality Network Wales (WEN Wales)

Formerly Wales Women's European Network (WWEN) and then Wales Women's National Coalition (WWNC)

Like NIWEP and Women's Forum Scotland, Wales' representation to the EWL was established expressly for that purpose. The Wales Women's European Network was set up following a meeting hosted by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, who acted as WWEN's secretariat for a number of years. Some contention mired the establishment of WWEN, with the already active Wales Assembly of Women (WAW) pushing to take on the European role. However, EWL requirements around the nature of national delegations (to be comprised of organisations and not individuals) and WAW's more limited membership base took WAW out of the running, although it continues to be an active organisation in Wales.

WWEN was relatively modest in scope due to its financial situation and the lack of a professional secretariat. It provided Wales' representation to the EWL for about 15 years before it was absorbed by the Wales Women's National Coalition (WWNC). Staffed entirely by volunteers, WWEN focused predominantly on information sharing and to this end kept up a notable schedule of events. Support was received in kind by the European Commission office in Wales (based in Cardiff), which facilitated the early Annual Conferences; and then later from the Equal Opportunities Commission Office in Cardiff, established in 1996.

"And so, we had this annual conference and it went from there. I must say the beginnings were not really on equality as much as on Europeanisation and that was information giving to a rather clueless membership of what was going on in Europe and how Europe works, so our conferences were really beaming this information out to them ... the equality aspect developed later..."

From the outset, the WWEN's Annual Conferences were based on EWL programmes as well as the various campaigns for equality promoted by the European Parliament Women's and Equal Opportunities Committee and supported by Welsh MEPs. In all its pre-devolution activity, WWEN resolutions and recommendations were forwarded to the appropriate UK Government departments and organisations. For the earlier years therefore, its main objective appeared to be 'keeping the European torch' alive in Wales, although it remained largely distant from other EU-focused activity.

"So it ended up more as an information giving and educational network rather than a lobbying one. Although with our contacts through MEPs, and one or two were always at our conferences, particularly Jill Evans, the Plaid Cymru MEP who was on the equal

opportunities committee in Brussels in the European Parliament. She always attended, and sometimes Eluned Morgan when she was an MEP..."

WWEN did undertake some notably successful lobbying of the Advisory Board to set up a cross departmental Equal Opportunities Committee in the new Assembly for Wales to monitor women's rights, the pay gap and violence against women. This was the time when a new women's organisation arrived on the scene, following the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999.

The WWNC was established in function of the Equality Duty embedded in the 1998 Government of Wales Act. It enjoyed (albeit minimal) funding and, therefore, some paid staff. The two organisations ran in parallel for a number of years.

"I don't think anybody was interested in Europe, strangely enough, at the time because I think it was hard enough for people getting adjusted to the Assembly. And they did have really good speakers and I think their most successful conference they had about 90 people, and Glenys Kinnock, somebody from the Commission, I can't remember who the other speaker was, but it was obviously a very successful conference."

In the mid-2000s, the WWNC absorbed WWEN's European activity and WWEN ceased to exist. WWNC continued this role until its closure in 2010 when the Welsh Government ceased its funding. This decision caused a notable backlash, with vociferous demands from civil society for the Welsh Government to explain how they were intending ensure the views of women were represented in policy-making. Continued lobbying led to the establishment of Women's Equality Network Wales (WEN Wales) in 2010.

"... there was a very integral point when the sisters of the UKJCW came together to help us have an organisation like WEN in Wales, but it was one of the integral points of us having an organisation in Wales because we needed to have a seat around the table at UKJCW and we needed to be able to link to our European sisters and there was not another... Welsh government removed the money and we said to them, 'Do you know what you are going to lose? Your links to this international network of women'"

WEN Wales has government funding, although has increasingly diversified its funding sources over the years. It has a staff team covering policy, communications and fundraising, along with project-specific staff, working under the leadership of the Director. It is a key civil society player and advocate for women's rights and gender equality in Wales.

- WEN Wales: <https://wenwales.org.uk/>

4 Four Nations Working and Winning Together

The structure and functioning of the UKJCW

The UKJCW functions according to a protocol, which has been updated at various points in time, and most recently in 2013. This protocol sets out the provisions for four nations working in function of the governance structures of the EWL, with changes in the organisation of the UKJCW reflecting governance changes in the EWL.

From the outset, the EWL Board (originally known as the Bureau) and the Annual General Assembly have been key parts of the EWL's governance structure. The EWL Board is comprised of one Board Member per national coordination, i.e. there is one EWL Board Member from the UK. The UKJCW was therefore initially established as an internal UK mechanism, to structure and organise the UK's representation to the EWL, specifically the EWL Board. In turn, the UKJCW membership is comprised of two individuals from each of the four constituent organisations, i.e. eight in total. Four distinct roles were carved out and shared between the UKJCW constituent organisations on a two-yearly rotating basis. This four-pronged structure remains today. One UKJCW member is the EWL Board Member, another is the Alternate; with the two other organisations acting as UKJCW Convenor (or Chair) and Secretary respectively.

With respect to the annual General Assembly, originally, each state had a four-seat delegation (as discussed above), with attendance for all four individuals funded by the EWL. The delegation itself could be formed at the discretion of each state. As such, whilst many states opted for a single national coordination, the UK's four seat delegation afforded each constituent organisation of the UKJCW direct membership of the EWL, i.e. there were four national coordinations in the UK. At the General Assembly, this original four seat model accorded voting rights to each member of the delegation, i.e. each of the four sister organisations of the UKJCW had its own vote at the annual General Assembly.

This four-seat delegation changed in advance of the 2004 enlargement, when the EWL statutes changed to allow only one coordination per state. From this point onwards, the UKJCW was no longer solely an internal mechanism but became the UK's official national coordination. At the same time, the EWL also reduced the number of delegates to the annual General Assembly from four to three delegates per national coordination. Therefore, there were only three votes per national coordination at the General Assembly and the EWL only provided funding for three delegates to attend. Later, there was a further change that reduced the number of paid delegates to two (with the number of votes remaining three per national coordination). Notably, this change was popular with the European wide members who have always only had one vote.

Notwithstanding this shift from four to three and then to two paid delegates per state/national coordination, the UKJCW committed to ensuring that each of its four constituent organisations would be able to attend the General Assembly; and that the UKJCW's constituent organisations would agree voting intentions in advance. It was agreed that in the rare event that consensus is not reached, delegates from the UK will abstain from voting.

As such, from the UKJCW's perspective, all four attendees are delegates; however, from the EWL's perspective, two individuals are delegates and two require observer state. This need for additional places can cause practical problems for the EWL around the venue and also can also create a feeling of imbalance, with a greater number of attendees from one state or organisation.

In the days before teleconferencing and internet meetings were widely available, representatives from the UKJCW's constituent organisations would meet twice per year in person: once at the Annual General Assembly and once at a meeting hosted on a rotating basis.

"There was no great use of internet then: it was telephone, faxes, papers were exchanged, and we met twice a year ... as a committee with our alternates to discuss anything that we should be doing next or what had come from Brussels. The communication in those days worked very well but it was paper bound and by telephone conversations or video telephone conferences very well, you know."

The schedule of four nations meetings has shifted over time, becoming notably more flexible in light of technological advances. Today, an annual face-to-face meeting is complemented by an informal catch-up in the margins of the annual General Assembly and supplemented by regular online meetings and email exchanges between UKJCW sister organisations.

There were governance clashes that had to be overcome to ensure that representatives from each of the four organisations could, in the words of one workshop participant, "be equal in our relationships with the UKJCW in terms of representation at the European Women's Lobby". This related to the terms of office for both the Lobby Board (a two-year term, renewable twice) and the UKJCW's constituent organisations, and the principle of rotating roles between the four organisations.

"... NAWO has the same rules about how long you can hold a position as the European Women's Lobby, so two-year terms, which have to be a maximum of six and then you have to step down, which is the same at the European Women's Lobby. So we realised in our discussion in the UKJCW that if we really stuck to that, none of us, we would never have a role, a senior role, on the executive of the European Women's Lobby, so if we wanted to be more evidenced, we would have to allow or enable given members to stay longer at representing the UK through the UKJCW sometimes, which I think was a sisterly thing to do and it was a really fun time."

This decision enabled the election of Annette Lawson, the UKJCW representative on the Lobby Board, to stand and be elected to the Vice-Presidency of the Lobby. She was one of a number

of UKJCW members to hold a senior role, including Lesley Sutherland and Liz Law who both held the role of Treasurer. To be on the Executive was perceived as positive for the UKJCW and the UK more broadly and was considered useful in relation to the UK Government's attitude towards the EU.

The work of the UKJCW

When asking participants for their reflections about the work of the UKJCW, responses covered very practical, substantive and values-based points.

“How did the organisations of the UKJCW work with each other?”

- Capacity building: better understanding/learning from across the UK including through conferences and informal links
- Feminist network – solidarity/friendships/partnership working
- Strengthened negotiating as a small nation
- Governance work: In the early days there was a lot of work on developing/strengthening the governance of the EWL
- Practicalities (e.g. comms) have evolved over time
- Policy work: Through the pre-EWL General Assembly meetings, including re: 50-50, budget, UK's gender equality architecture
- Nature of four nations working through the UKJCW is structured and democratic
- “Ready alliances” through TUC meetings

When asked about the UKJCW's greatest achievement, it was notable that most participants did not highlight a specific substantive policy or political accomplishment, but instead considered the continued existence of the UKJCW to be an achievement in and of itself.

“What was the UKJCW's greatest achievement?”

- Working partnerships across Europe
- Bringing together and maintaining a relationship of equality
- Sticking it out / sticking it out!
- Pressing the UK Government to have a closer relationship with the EU
- Collaborate and working with other partners
- Collective UK representation at the EWL for 30 years

- Negotiating a coordination of equals
- Resolving tensions and challenges
- Sustaining 30+ years
- Persevering
- Existence / Existing
- Initiative of a collaboration of women between nations
- A voice

Participants noted that the activity of the UKJCW had been focused both within the UK and at an EU level, although the former specifically pre-2010 and through the now abolished WNC.

"We lobbied the UK government. We would write to the government or they fed into the Women's National Commission and we would write to various government ministers on various issues... [We'd work together to get joint positions]... Yes, and then put that through the Women's National Commission."

With respect to EU-level activity, the UKJCW would respond to EWL calls. Before the shift away from the four-seat delegation to General Assembly there was no requirement for all UKJCW members to vote in the same way, although a common approach was sought.

"[Our personal links to the EWL were crucial.] We would get a lot of information ... about what was coming up, what we needed to answer, what consultations we needed to put in on and we were able to then hold various meetings and get feedback from [our members] and push that through...I don't remember a huge level of disagreement on policies in the UK. I think there was on prostitution, funnily enough, but apart from that the basics like women's legal and financial independence, all of that was taken as read, we were all on the same page."

"I mean, yes, obviously the primary focus of discussions would be, if there was an upcoming General Assembly there was need to discuss it - who was going to be going, who was representing, etc. But also things like, yes, okay, so there's likely to be discussion on this, discussion on that, do we share their views? Because certainly, at the start, it was possible, while... the commitment was that we would seek to operate in unity together, but it was perfectly possible - and we did on occasion - it was perfectly possible, for example, for [our organisation] to say, "No, our view of that particular policy matter is different. And so if it's voted on or whatever, we will vote differently from the other three." And that was allowed. But obviously here we would talk it through before. So there were those kind of business things that were in it, obviously, as well [as] about policy and what our priorities were and where we were going."

A recurring theme throughout the day – and a point widely held as an achievement of the UKJCW – was the development of relationships and understanding across the four nations. The learning was both substantive (in terms of policy responses) but also strategic, with respect to tactics of lobbying for change, particularly as a small nation.

“... I think the main aspect is really to understand ... where the other nations are coming from and to recognise that they are different and that we can work together although we are different. And I mean Wales, in many ways are behind the Scottish developments, and Northern Ireland was always the example of how well they were working together, how organised they were already in NAWO, and how they were funded. That really was an example to us. I mean, I must say, [we] also had a very, very good relationship with the MEPs - we had three women MEPs who were very, very supportive... So it was collaboration all round, a collaboration between the nations and within the country, and also with an extension to the Lobby. Some of friendships and personal impressions were quite strong as well.”

“... I also subsequently had conversations through the links between UKJCW, for example, [she] used to call me and talk about... we’d talk about misogyny and hate crimes and what we wanted to do with that, and how it was working in Scotland and what I could learn from her [in Wales] and [what] she could learn from me. And it wasn’t necessarily formally part of the UKJCW, but it was there and really important. And we had that value of each other’s opinions.”

“The other thing that I learned from working with UKJCW is I had impact beyond UKJCW, on how to negotiate as a small nation ... How to negotiate and have an equal voice and put a Welsh perspective forward and the Welsh difference forward within the UK conversation... [within] the wider conversations that were happening in the London-led women’s effort. [within the] UKJCW, I could learn from my sisters, so watch my public sisters doing that, but also, I knew that there were [others] that understood that conversation...”

The process of working together has been stressed as remarkable in and of itself. Over time, the different organisations and individuals have got to know each other and have started to work with each other beyond the bounds of the UKJCW.

“You know, you’re contributing to the European Women’s Lobby but actually as four nations you’re working together on other things as well. That’s really fascinating because the beginnings of this are to feed into Europe but actually, as times goes on, you are working on broader issues and that’s really, sort of, crucial, yes.”

“The work relating to European Women’s Lobby didn’t take place in isolation. So, for example, devolution and democratic deficit ... for example, 50/50 campaigns because that was a hugely important part of the devolution campaign in Scotland. And so, as we were meeting, we would be saying, “Oh, we’ve got a conference coming up called Changing the Face of Scottish Parliament, so if you want to come...” Or we might have invited

someone... as a speaker or something like that. And we were learning what was happening in Wales, say, about this and all of the kind of community building and all the activities happening in Northern Ireland, which of course affected us but, equally, we were learning from them."

This spill-over has served to build capacity more broadly across the UK around the promotion of women's rights and gender equality, and territorial politics.

In and of itself, the creation and survival of the UKJCW is a notable achievement. Particularly prior to political devolution across the UK, it was by no means guaranteed that such a quasi-federal structure would be viable or would stand the test of time. The remarkable women behind the UKJCW – driven by their commitment to bettering the lives of women and advancing gender equality – worked through technological and governance obstacles in their efforts to promote equality through their work with the Lobby. They seized opportunities to strengthen their own advocacy activity by learning from each other and, in turn, offered the UKJCW as something of a blueprint for intra-UK working (as discussed in chapter 3).

5 The Challenges of Four Nations Working

According to participants, the UKJCW has weathered a number of challenges over the years. One of notable significance was that of resource, including resource disparity between the four sister organisations. Fortunes have waxed and waned over time: with NAWO beginning as the largest and most well-resourced to being entirely run by volunteers today; to Engender and WEN Wales enjoying funding from their respective governments (with the former receiving a larger sum) and, as such, having staff teams; and the Women's Platform securing funds from time to time (although not from the Northern Ireland Executive or Assembly). The development of the Scottish and Welsh political systems in the context of political devolution has certainly impacted on the health of the Scottish and Welsh civil society organisations.

Of course, the issue of resource impacts on the viability of each organisation and raises questions about its ability to function independently.

"...in terms of this dilemma, or the potential conflict, we see [around] receiving resources from government and using those resources [to lobby that government]... First of all, I suppose my difficult position is, it's a good problem to have... gaining the resource, first of all. Because for all those years there was no resource and, certainly, in all the time that I was active in terms of the UK Joint Committee, there was never any funding, and that was one of the big problems because we attempted to live our principles... [The meetings] were very expensive ... And [all of] that, I'm sure, makes all of our other relationships more fraught because, as I say, we are trying to do it correctly as we all agreed but it was difficult."

Whilst Engender, NAWO, WEN Wales and the Women's Platform work with each other as part of the UKJCW, this grouping does not hold the monopoly on four nations activity. Notably, the Women's Resource Centre won the tender to draft England's Shadow CEDAW report (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) in 2018 and 2021; with Engender, WEN Wales and the Women's Platform drafting the reports from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.

"... from my perspective [in Wales], what exists outside the UKJCW, is that we work very closely with the Fawcett Society and with Engender and on other projects. For example, we did a great joint four nations project on the impact of Covid 19 on women - we did some polling, we got some funding, we put out a report, not only a UK report but also our own nation's. And that has been incredibly helpful for providing evidence here for the Welsh Government to say, "This is how women have been impacted ... they have been made redundant, or they have additional caring responsibilities, or anxiety"... so we work a lot with other four nations groupings. And I think one of the reasons for that probably

is that I don't think, as far as I understand it, NAWO have paid employees doing all the stuff with this policy work that we all want to do. So that's why it works like that."

It was also acknowledged that the UKJCW was a difficult group at times. There was reference to suspected rivalry between organisations and politics that overshadowed attention to policy. Tensions manifest at certain points and around specific roles; however, it was not agreed the extent to which this tension was down to people as opposed to being a reflection of inter-institutional struggles. This compounded the issue of ensuring smooth working between the members of UKJCW, which was remarked as an ongoing matter for consideration.

"... the challenge was, which I did effectively sometimes and not effectively others, was to make sure that everything got fed back through to the four countries."

The issue of policy divergence featured in discussion, although not heavily. It was noted that, unsurprisingly, divergence had become more pronounced as devolution had unfolded. Outside the discussions in the workshop, individuals stressed that more recently the right to abortion and the rights of trans-women had been areas of contestation.

"It makes it harder to represent a UK position, you're always constantly having to work harder and harder and harder, [overspeaking] more and more... about how we actually work together, because probably more and more often we are going to have differences of opinion."

It was also stressed by one participant in particular that they had to be mindful of articulating their distinctive position when there were other UK-based representatives from beyond the UKJCW. The 17 European networks which are members of the EWL (such as Business and Professional Women (BPW) Europe, Soroptimist International Europe and World Association of Girl Guides and Scouts), are occasionally represented by individuals who are UK-based. This presents its own challenges for ensuring sensitivity to the different territories of the UK.

"... Because there are some, for example often in the Observatory ... there have been a couple of representatives that are UK-based, but they're not UK representatives, and they are giving slightly different narratives. Just interesting... Especially now [meetings are] not in [the same] physical space, because it's very hard to chase them down in the corridor and just go, "Just to check, are you going to say this about the DA Act?" ... so the UK representation isn't just us..."

Our discussions highlighted that, despite the shared goal of advancing women's right and gender equality, political differences between feminist actors combined with the uncertainty of financial resources and the viability of the constituent organisations provided a particular set of dynamics and challenges for those involved. Whilst such challenges have been overcome, they have also at times detracted from the purpose and essence of political mobilisation.

6 The Meaning of EWL Membership

When reflecting on the significance of the EWL for the UKJCW, of particular note to participants was the role it played in securing a four nations structure and the creation or designation of the four respective sister organisations to feed into this structure. Over the years, as part of their EWL membership, each of the four nations of the UK has maintained a designated representative body and they have all continued to work together. In turn, this has built trust and mutual respect.

“From the EWL, what we have got is one conduit to constituent parts in the UK. It was an imperative and an agenda for collaboration, and formed the different networks and [an imperative] to work together.”

“Yes. I wonder if it’s actually the structure that’s important. We talk about four nations working, but how much actual working do we do? Preserving the structure and the awareness of the structure - so there isn’t actually the collective working... It’s the securing the structure which allows all the various voices to be there. There hasn’t been too much successful working.”

Once the EWL was established, an important benefit of membership was the opportunity open to each organisation to be part of and to establish international networks from which to draw solidarity, share policy ideas and develop an understanding of the EU, its institutions and policy-making. Each of these elements built capacity at a domestic, sub-state territorial level.

“... we got quite a lot of the same thing back, I think. Which was learning about other approaches and priorities, how other women and structures built trust, how important mutual respect was, obviously information about the EU structures themselves and how to deal with them, and how that informed how you worked at home and with other organisations, if you knew that something was going to be coming up ... well, you could maybe speak to an MEP who was in your area, to make sure that this aspect of equality of women would be incorporated.”

“I think for our network it meant a great deal because we always had sometimes representative from the European Women’s Lobby there [at our events] for instance. They set up the Observatory on Violence against Women and we had the director to speak to our conference on violence against women. We had somebody to talk about the attitude to refugees and women refugees in particular.

So it meant a great deal, and it was not only informative, it also engaged the various organisations to do something themselves and look more deeply into the problem, you know.

I think we had in Wales probably a stronger link to the European Women's Lobby than some of the other networks because I was the representative at the Observatory and I was quite passionate about it that we should bring in the European Women's Lobby into our deliberations more."

The EWL provided the organisations of the UKJCW with both a privileged access to the EU agenda and relevant information about the EU and the developing equality agenda.

Furthermore, the EWL provided multiple opportunities with respect to funding, with particular reference made to funds available in the area of violence against women.

"... what I remember was particularly round about Daphne [European funding to prevent and combat gender-based violence and violence against children] – and it was the fact that before this, you might hear these things, but you'd no idea what they were, or how you got into them – so being in the Lobby, they were able to explain these things to you, and point you in the right direction, and would know which part of the Commission, which office or wherever it was that was going to be dealing with that, and obviously as well, the Lobby was seeking to influence where funding was being given, and what the profile of funding was, that there should be more that had an equality profile. So it wasn't a direct connection of, "Oh, the Lobby's saying apply for this and you'll get some money," it was more, "Here are the different programmes ... how can the Lobby influence how the programme is shaped?""

In addition to developing understanding of EU funding and influencing the shape of future funds, the Lobby provided access to partners for transnational bids.

"... you could apply for European funds for projects. So I know that we did that. And we did that with some partners in the UK Joint Committee and other partners because it had to be transnational, so we had ready alliances there for that who were doing work... we knew that we and the Scots and the Irish were doing something similar around women and decision making, and we needed to bring in a transnational partner to get some funding into that and actually to bring some models, some work advice. Those were also of added value."

Engagement at the EU-level brought feminists in the UK into contact with activists from across Europe who were fighting some common – and some different – battles.

"The representation of women across member states was really important. Migrant women was important, prostitution. I remember women's financial and legal independence. I remember being absolutely shocked at a meeting in Brussels when the Spanish feminists were saying that they still couldn't get a bank account without their husband's signature."

The importance of transnational solidarity was clearly strongly felt.

"Being part of the European Women's Lobby also means that when things happen that we need to react to to support sisters throughout Europe, that means that as countries

we have to get together. Either we send a draft letter of support or a statement, raise things on social media, raise issues for other women where we live.”

Comparative data and policy expertise was also identified as of value, particularly for lobbying political institutions that looked favourably towards European integration.

“I think the link to European comparative information and that expertise has been particularly useful, both as a lobbying tool, to be able to know what other countries are doing, and particularly because we’ve got a – and always have for the last 20 years of devolution – pro-European Government in the Senedd. We’ve been able to provide that representation in regard to, “This is what’s coming from the EU as a policy ...” or being able to say, “This is coming in other countries as an example,” rather than using just a UK example, it’s been a very useful tool for lobbying and discussions with the Government.”

The opportunity to leverage between layers of governance was highlighted as a key benefit of EU membership more broadly.

“So a huge piece of learning for me very broadly in UK Joint Committee work was the potential for leveraging or levering our engagement with the EU and with the UK more broadly with the Scottish Government. So essentially what you do is you use your voice at the UN or at the [EU] or in some setting that the Scottish government may or may not have a real clue about how influential it is. And we say see what we’re saying about Scotland in the international setting. We’re saying good things but we’re also saying bad things... That’s a lever for us to then argue with the Scottish government that they need to fix that and conversely we can go into Westminster and say, “Well, the Scottish government seems to be performing better than you in terms of what the European standards are. We can help you improve that because you don’t want to be embarrassed by the Scottish government,” which let me tell you is such a big influence as sophomoric as it is... So it turned out, it looked like it might be a significantly helpful tool and that was absolutely true and we still use it all the time.”

The EWL also provides support and springboard for UN and international work.

“We get the EWL coordination at the UN... we cut our teeth doing the European work, and developing partners there, which was the jumping off point for NIWEP to do UN and international work, which even led to us being able to – with no money, I booked plane tickets for 15 people to go to [the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in] Beijing, and I have no money to pay for them when I get them. That gives you ... [laughter] honestly the truth... I’ve been in [the third World Conference on Women in 1985] in Nairobi, thinking this was going to be a wee conference, and there were 26,000 women there, and I went, “Oh my god.” And there was a big delegation from Ireland. Nobody from Northern Ireland ever got anywhere, anywhere. [I was told], you didn’t need to go, when I asked ... because people from London were going and would represent us. [Laughter] So we booked the tickets anyway and we organised. So we cut our teeth at Europe, and that allowed us to do this.”

Particular benefits of EWL membership for Northern Ireland were stressed as supporting efforts as part of the Peace Process.

“From the EWL, it gave us the opportunity for a cross-community, cross-class women’s network or organisation. This cannot be overstated. None such existed in Northern Ireland before this. It enabled greater North-South collaboration by women, as partners in the EWL, gave us a formal organisation with a sister organisation, even though some of us were already friends, to actually say it – we are going to work together and get profile together, build on the Peace Process, intervene with foreign affairs, intervene at the Assembly etcetera etc. So we absolutely contributed to steps in the Peace Process.”

Also, through the European work, activists from Northern Ireland developed political capital.

“It gave us increased credibility and status, with the Northern Ireland Executive and officials. We were the ones, no officials were doing European work, because they were all scared of Whitehall, it was the voluntary sector that introduced, and the wider voluntary sector, not just the women’s side, introduced the European dimension to officials and got them on board. Organised the social partners for Northern Ireland, that was all organised out of [this]... which hardly gets recognition for that. So in brief, credibility and status with the Executive Office and officials. We had a presence with the European Union office in Northern Ireland, and more widely politically, going to see the President, up in Ireland bringing a manifesto. And then we had the cross-community, cross-class to challenge political parties on manifestos and what they were doing on women, and on driving participation in the peace negotiations. NIWEP played a significant role in the formation of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition of being at the table. So we got a lot out of it, we think. And it’s one of our driving forces to actually have it.”

Through the course of our discussions, it was stressed that the very existence of the UKJCW – as an innovative four nations structure – was predicated on the need to establish a representation to the EWL. The EWL therefore had a substantive and significant bearing on women’s mobilisation through organised civil society in the UK. As a result of this equality of equals structure, subsequent benefits (such as formulating networks for knowledge generation and exchange, and access to comparative data) were used to build capacity at the domestic (sub-state) level, which was particularly valuable in the context of limited resources.

7

The UKJCW at the Heart of the EWL

"... in the first days as well, having set up the [UKJCW], having set up our organisation, quite a lot of our discussion as well was about setting up the Lobby. So I would be going to a Board meeting and reporting back that, "Oh, those ones are totally opposed to any discussion round about such and such." And so there was a lot about - what was the advice from the group? Were you happy that I took this line and said, "No, no, we must have this, or we must support that?" So there was a lot of sharing that information because the Lobby was quite challenged to begin with, just in terms of setting itself up. So the focus was very much, in the early days, on the model and on the relationships... But through all that, we were learning all the time from each other as well."

As active members of the EWL, the UKJCW and its constituent organisations made notable contributions to the EWL. The nature of these contributions changed over time, with much early energy focused on the development of the EWL's own infrastructure and governance. Reflections about feminist activity that pre-dated the establishment of the EWL highlighted the constraints of the context within which women's mobilisation took place.

"... it was challenging and it was a struggle because when we started, nobody had any money. There was no money to do anything, so we were going off the backs of what we could beg and borrow and off the backs of interested organisations that we were working for to be able to attend anything, to buy cheap airfares and airfares were not cheap in those days and the meetings happened in people's houses, so we went to people's houses and slept on people's floors and all of that to actually start the European Network of Women and ... we were part of some of the early work in developing discussions around statutes and all of that at the European level."

Whilst individuals were professional in their approach, there was a piece of work to do to professionalise the nascent Lobby. It was to these individuals to build the EWL's governance structures. In particular, the UK Board member from Scotland, Lesley Sutherland, played a notable role in supporting this development.

"...[as the] first UK Board member of the European Women's Lobby, so that is another seminal [achievement] to even get through the first Board meeting really because that was just twenty women in a room, most of us had never met each other. I think for the first one we did have professionally provided interpretation, but that was just for the first session. After that, we had to interpret for ourselves, so that meant that people like me who could speak both English and French, I would not only say what I wanted to say, but also [translate] what others wanted to say (which might be completely at odds with my position). For example, the Spanish woman Pilar was speaking in French and had to be interpreted into English, etc."

“The first core meeting, we arrived there – this massive effort across Europe to arrive there – and we spent two days looking at the statutes, and we got that, and we got people elected to the Board. There we were: what were we going to do, and how were we going to do it? ... And so people were desperate to start talking about poverty, women in decision-making, what were the projects we were going to do. And one of the things that I did, with the support of others on the Joint Committee, was to say, “We need to have the means of doing it. You can’t have a project unless you’ve got some kind of infrastructure.” And so it’s that kind of methods of working, standing orders, when do the minutes get circulated, you know, and just having some kind of structure. And that’s when also you come across the right approach.”

Accounts highlight the contributions of individuals from the UK in shoring up the governance architecture of the EWL, and in helping to set its shape.

“... there were very different views round the table as to how you ran any organisation. And I think what we did contribute was this shared approach of things that we’d been doing, and a lot of it from the Northern Ireland experience, about building trust, about building networks and relationships, about how you engage people in the activity, and you’re not just doing top-down, and so on and so forth.

All of that, because we had to take into account the very different cultures, very different priorities, and very different perceptions even round about what equality was. Because that varied enormously.”

The UKJCW’s contributions to the EWL date back to the early days of the EWL’s establishment, as women from across Europe worked together to build a new governance structure. Of course, a balance had to be struck between securing an appropriate organisational structure and the business of substantive of policy change, although initial work on the former was essential. As noted in chapter 4, on a number of occasions UKJCW members have sat on the Board’s Executive and in these roles they made important contributions to the leadership of the EWL.

8 Taking Stock of Brexit

The *raison d'être* of the UKJCW can be found in the EU project. Therefore, participants universally agreed that the UK's withdrawal from the EU was significant for the UKJCW. Following the EU Referendum in 2016, the UKJCW requested and secured continued membership of the EWL. This was secured through an amendment to the EWL's internal rules, such that a national coordination can maintain full membership even if the state they represent changes its formal relationship with the EU (Article 2, European Women's Lobby, 2019). This amendment was supported by the Lobby Board in February 2019 and then later approved unanimously by the General Assembly on 7 June 2019.

"They've given us flexibility and solidarity post-Brexit, to actually remain in membership. And this is a good one that came from Emma [Ritch], because of that, which needs to be remembered, we are on an inside track, with privileged access to what's happening at the EU-level, that can actually prepare us to act. And that's I think an important political point."

However, despite continued EWL membership, there were acknowledged implications for the UKJCW and its constituent organisations. A recurring theme was that of access to networks and spaces to meet.

"... I think it's just that general sense of reducing the opportunity for conversation and, you know, putting heads together to find better ways of doing things, whether you are talking about practical solutions to violence against women or more esoteric things – and particularly because we are all English speaking – you know it makes the conversation just that little bit less rich, or that little bit less potentially important,"

"... But it is, it's the informal network and the information gathering and solidarity of women, that you can do and action things through networking, rather than from the political organisation."

There was some discussion about the extent to which Brexit constituted a loss of influence. On the one hand, the UK had withdrawn itself from the political structures of the EU such as the European Parliament, with the UK outside the EU's legal frameworks (apart from Northern Ireland). On the other, the UKJCW was to remain a full member of the EWL.

"... we do still have power in terms of, obviously, we vote like everyone else on emergency motions and [as the Board member], your vote counts like anyone else, right, on the Board? So we haven't lost power, in the sense that we are still a bonafide [EWL member]... we can still say to EWL that, for example, I'm in a Women in Politics group, so I can still say ... "Can we look at this, or have you got that?". [But now], you know, will they still listen to us?"

There was also a sense that the qualitative nature of the partnership of equals had shifted on a number of counts. Firstly, this was noted with respect to the unique status of Northern Ireland.

"... I think one of the interesting things is that actually, [the UKJCW is] not now four equal nations, because Northern Ireland has more [space] in terms of the EU. Partly because of the [Northern Ireland] Protocol, being that the [Northern Ireland] Protocol is nothing to do with the European Women's Lobby, but also because there is a recognition that the Northern Ireland situation is unique. And in that sense, the Northern Ireland organisation has access to the Irish Government and has always been able to have a voice there as well."

The reconfigured special case of Northern Ireland was noted to have potential implications for the UKJCW's status.

"So you can either look at that as cheeky brats, or you can say, "Right, actually we've got a Trojan horse." If we're working together as four nations, and we can't easily, directly have the influence we might have had – but more importantly that the influence may be on our Government – so that makes it very tricky. We can actually exercise a little bit of – if we stick together, we do have an opportunity. Until Northern Ireland decides to leg it. But they'd be kind to you afterwards, I think. [Laughter] So, Brexit has created this curious thing,"

Beyond the "curiosity" of this new relationship, it also gave cause for concern. Articulated from an Irish perspective,

"That sense that it's really sad. It's really disappointing. For women obviously the main concerns on this island are about the north/south piece and the trade piece and all of that. But you know I think there is a sense that those places where we all met up and found common cause, but yet respected each other's nation states and differences and cultural differences. A piece of that now is gone, and given that you are our nearest neighbour that really, really is very sad."

Beyond Northern Ireland, another shift in the balance between the four nations was noted with respect to divergent levels of investment in a European future.

"Scotland is also interested in retaining its relationship. It's not the same as in England. And there have been murmurings about Scotland and Ireland linking up and having discussions about those things. So there are other things shifting there too."

The loss in comparative data was highlighted as a key concern, with the potential of the UK to drift from EU data collection norms over time; however, once again, Northern Ireland emerged as a unique case.

"[The Protocol] says that there cannot be, essentially on the island of Ireland, so in Northern Ireland, and within the EU, there cannot be a divergence of human rights

standards. And the only way you're going to know that is if you compare yourself with the EU. So that's why they need to have that evidence."

Despite the concerns about the loss of comparative European data and an "unplugging" from the European political system, the UKJCW's constituent organisations had not pivoted towards other work.

"[Looking at our international work, it's] unchanged for Wales, certainly, because we've got enough of a job doing what we do here, and I know that's... You know, ideally, we'd be working on international things more. But yes, so we don't. We haven't changed."

"... we haven't gone, "Oh, because of Brexit, we'll now do more internationally.""

"I'm very well aware, Engender's been doing work on CEDAW for years. And obviously that's continuing, and so as far as I can see; I don't think there's been any significant shift. They're continuing to do a lot of work on CEDAW, in parallel with European perspectives as well."

It was notable that the issue of capacity framed these conversations, as well as any re-assessment of the future relationship with the EU. However, the overwhelming sentiment was one of continued desire to invest in and maintain engagement with Europe.

"... we need to collectively think, what are our priorities, what's our approach, all the rest of it. But surely we're not going to renounce an opportunity to keep that slight foothold in there [in Europe], and with all the benefits that we know we get from being in the Lobby, and with all the things that we know we can contribute collectively to the Lobby; for goodness sake, why would we not take that as an opportunity? Because still what happens in the European Union affects us, not the same way as they did, but it still affects us. What the European Union, and this huge Single Market, and all, what it is doing, is of concern to us, because geographically, the United Kingdom and the island of Ireland have not actually moved. So it's still important what happens over there. So to me, although as I say, I regret it, absolutely, I think you take every opportunity to maintain those links, and yes, look at new links and new approaches, but you know, let's keep it, let's use it."

Unsurprisingly, there was also attention paid to the future of the EWL as it has an increasing number of members from outside the EU, including prospective Member States. Membership of states from the European Economic Area had always been permitted, with a coordination from Iceland as the first from an EEA state joining in February 2019. The UK was the second national coordination to fall outside the EU and Accession States, increasing the differentiation within the EWL.

"So the EWL is going to have to shift as well, otherwise it is going to have two classes of membership; it's going to have real members, who are members of the EU, and these others. But actually if that is a [primarily] European, not necessarily EU structure, [if that] is what is playing out, then the Lobby will have to change how it works, and so

[the UKJCW] will have an opportunity to be influential, but you do actually have to stand back and ask yourselves [overspeaking] you're trying to influence."

This point was highlighted as one of particular relevance to the UKJCW as non-EU members.

"I think one of the things that the Lobby hasn't quite got clear, is what their role is beyond the EU perspective, and that work, and so it often acts in an exclusionary way, for those that are not EU-focused, primarily."

Related to this was the matter of EWL funding, with participants noting that if the EWL sought and won funding from non-EU bodies (specifically beyond the European Commission which is its primary funding source) then non-EU members of the EWL would be able to continue their participation in EWL projects. Recent Google funding was provided as an example.

"[There was the] point we mentioned earlier about the evolution of the EWL and about how they have got some questions to answer about who they represent, how they represent their members, and it's attached to the funding questions."

It is certainly the case that the UK's departure from the EU had the potential to dismantle the UKJCW, but the determination and creativity of those involved has resulted in its continuation and a reformulation of its relationship with the EWL. However, in the context of uncertain relationships (between the UK and the EU, and between the nations within the UK), this matter is far from settled. Indeed, challenges remain in terms of its future existence and purpose in the context of an evolving European's Women's Lobby.

9

Looking to the Next Chapter of the UKJCW

"It would be, in a sense, almost disastrous if... if you look back at where we were 32 years ago, or whatever, when this was all kicking off, and what life was like then, how we lived then, where we were then in terms of dialogue or [understanding of the] concept and equality and diversity and etc., and approach. If we were doing things the same way now as we did then, that would be a disaster."

"... the important thing to remember is not to get stuck in the past. I'm very enthused, after rather long years of retirement, that there are all these people much younger than me who are all busy taking it all forward, I think that's really great, and I think you can look back on the past too long, really."

The closing session of the day allowed for a reflection on the future of the UKJCW.⁷ Members of the UKJCW past and present shared their aspirations for the UKJCW, resulting in a list of actions to be taken forward. Underpinning the entire discussion was the shared belief that coming together on both a four and five nations basis has value; that the discussion, exchange and collaboration facilitated by the UKJCW has benefited each organisation and strengthened the UK's representation to the EWL. Notwithstanding this benefit, it was unanimously held that the creation and sustenance of such a balanced framework has been challenging; and that the time has come for the UKJCW to evolve in order to ensure that it is equipped to represent all women across the UK in the new post-Brexit environment.

The following set of actions were agreed:

- We must re-assess the UKJCW in this new post-Brexit context
- We must interrogate the benefits of the UKJCW
- We must look beyond structure and re-assess our underpinning principles
- We must remember our purpose: the representation of women to support the promotion of women's rights and gender equality
- We must look forward and evolve (and not get stuck in the past)
- We must look outwards and at the women we represent – and at the wider world
- We must work to ensure we are inclusive
- We must ensure cross-nations working
- We must re-assess our framework to ensure it is fit for purpose, includes members with the relevant expertise and has the necessary accountability mechanisms (including re: the Observatory)
- We must explore how we can use the EWL's thematic groups more effectively

⁷ Since the workshop, the authors were invited to join a UKJCW meeting to share and discuss some of their key reflections on the future of the UKJCW. Dr Rachel Minto joined a meeting on 16 September 2022.

- We must support the evolution of the EWL
- We must form and maintain alliances and link with the grassroots and the wider women's sector/movement
- We must maintain alliances and the power to negotiate

In pulling this list of actions together, there was a strong feeling that there needed to be a re-assessment of the purpose of the UKJCW and how it fits within the new governance architecture post-Brexit.

"[This is a] really important conversation because the UKJCW doesn't sit in a static context, we're sitting in a dynamic [one]... Brexit is one change, but we've sat through a lot of change in the last 30 years, you know, with devolution, with protocols and all sorts of things that have happened, so we always have that conversation, but I think we mustn't get stuck in the sort of navel gazing."

"So we need to reframe our objectives and almost go back to first principles, and Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland and England need to show - this is what we are doing, this is where we are in our nation with the work we are doing, and let's relook at what UKJCW is for."

"... we had a strategy kind of day every year. But I guess we haven't, perhaps, really thrown it all up in the air and thought - what is it we need to do and what could we do differently?"

"...how does the mechanism work for the four nations? But I think also it's how does the mechanism work now with the EWL's thematic views?"

Of course, linked to this conversation was attention to the very nature of the UKJCW.

"I think it's really important what people have said that it's a mechanism not an organisation ... I think that's actually freeing ... because that gives us the flexibility to do what we need to do. And the other thing ... it's that it's an evolution, and it's actually okay to be there, and "How do we do this?" and, "This is not working," and, "look at how..." it's okay to change."

"Yeah, it's a mechanism for collaboration, for supporting the different networks, for strategising together."

"But I think there was some discussion about - should it be doing this, or should it be doing that? Or should it remain simply a vehicle to coordinate the four organisations? ... There have probably been occasions where its purpose and functions have been less clear. But certainly, we need to think about and gain agreement around what is its function and purpose now. Again, you know what the basics are, to coordinate, etc. But how should it be interacting with other structures, decision making, etc., ... [other] women's organisations, the whole gamut."

This brought up a number of related considerations, including where responsibilities for certain activity should lie.

"... should it be a role and function of the UK Joint Committee to communicate, to send out and divulge all the information about Europe or wherever it might be? Or is that a function of the four organisations? But certainly, the role of communications and where those communications are going, and how, that needs to be part of the dialogue going forward. Because again, historically, very difficult in the past – lack of resources, etc. But still a valid point."

It was agreed that the principles of the UKJCW ought to sit at the heart of this assessment of the UKJCW's purpose.

"I'm looking at the protocol ... it says here in Section 4, "UK Joint Committee agrees that all our constituent groups are established on common principles agreed between them," ... This is a structural arrangement document. And I think it's really important that there are principles, and, in a sense, in order not to go over the past, having inductions in new members coming forward, because the principles need to be passed on.

That doesn't mean that the principles don't need to be interrogated to make sure that they're ... and relevant. I'm thinking back to the important thing that I think needs to be, and it will be stated because it's been said to many, is that very difficult negotiation to get to a co-equal relationship is absolutely central. And that is one of the central principles. And I say that looking back but handing it forward as a principle, in the context of increasing centralisation, reduction in democracy, in this country, and what's going forward. So, that seems to me an important...."

Furthermore, participants were clear that all discussions needed to be firmly located within the new post-Brexit context and broader international setting, and that assumptions should not be made about the reconfiguration of any relationships.

"So, Brexit has created this curious thing, and I [am reminded of a comment earlier about tectonic plates], everything has shifted. You almost have to stand way, way back, and stop trying to make what you've got work, when all the Lego pieces have moved. And say, "Right, okay, right, what is it now, and where is our power, and why do we want power, and how will we use it if we had it?"..."

"You also have the added complication I think of the commonwealth."

"But there is an issue going forward about the role of the UK Joint Committee and what role it plays collectively in relation to the UK, and where the UK exists, and how we protect and challenge, and how it gets onto that footing, not just pushing, continuing to push the EU, but pushing into the Council of Europe and the UN stuff, that actually some of its member organisations are already doing. I just want to kind of put that out there."

Related to this are new questions about the time organisations can dedicate to European activity, and the balance (once again) between process and policy.

"... every organisation has its own strategic objectives and strategic direction, and then it's carving out the time within your own organisation to make EWL or Women in Politics Group or the Observatory work a priority, because... yeah, there's just about a million things that everyone's got to do. So it's thinking, is it significant enough post-Brexit for us to give it all that time?"

"Sustaining the 'four nations' way of working has been very preoccupying for the UKJCW at times, with a sense that this has eclipsed the policy-focused work of the UKJCW."

"Because sometimes, particularly, I found, because I was willing to do the kind of work on things like statutes, standing orders ... all the governance stuff and all the rest of it, I sometimes almost forgot that I was interested in policy, you know, because everyone else was interested in policy and wanted to do policy, for all the right reasons, but also, I think sometimes, "Okay, well, someone's got to do it." And so, you can sometimes almost forget why it is you're doing it, and that's just fundamental: this is about making things better for women, all women, of all ages, from childhood to whatever."

"I think we spend a lot of time talking about our framework and how we work, and I think it's really important, because we are establishing this four nations approach, and so we always have to keep a critical eye on that and a check on that, and a conversation about how we're going to pass the power around the table and ... the different contexts that come [onto] the table.

"We mustn't forget to look back outward from the four nations that are sitting around the table. So, when we bring the four or six women around the table, however many women it is, when we bring together the UKJCW, often there's a conversation about the framework and how we're working, because it takes that conversation to being able to work, and in the context of evolving, we always have to rethink... But we need to also remember to turn back out ... sometimes it feels we focus a lot on the framework and not so much on why we need the framework and what we're doing."

"Well, it's a bit of both, because I think it's really important that we always have that context and that conversation about framework."

The extent to which the UKJCW was representative was also highlighted as a key issue for future consideration.

"I would say that the UKJCW feels really distant from women on the ground and the diversity of what is going on around feminism and the discussions around sexuality. It is not there and present in the everyday conversations I have been having throughout the pandemic. The conversations around ... the Istanbul Convention and how that is going to be ratified..."

"... about the UKJCW being distant from women's current reality and it is, but to me, that in itself is not necessarily an issue because for me, the UKJCW was there to manage and regulate, if you like, the relationships between the four organisations and to enable

that participation in the Women's European Lobby and so on. The committee was not of itself a body to campaign or whatever; it was a means of the organisations going about their business and coordinating on a UK business and so on. Certainly that, but if you like was not... it was more, if you like, [for] management almost."

Of course, this speaks to a broader set of questions about the representativeness of each of the four organisations and whether they are the most appropriate to act as the key networks of networks to feed into the UKJCW and the EWL. This point was raised but not discussed in depth in the workshop itself.

Beyond this consideration, the way in which the UKJCW engages with the EWL was highlighted as deserving attention. There were two prongs to this. The first looked at the EWL's thematic groups and the different ways in which the UKJCW could include its own members in the work of the Lobby where perhaps their expertise would align.

"So, personally, I wouldn't see any problem, but that would be a question of the stock-taking, about saying, "If this [group is looking at] violence against women, and the person who was representing the network on the UK Joint Committee didn't have that expertise, that one wouldn't say, "Should we get someone who is an expert from our network to do that?" ..."

"A: Maybe that needs to be a discussion around the framework and the membership and where the boundaries are around that, but it's surely worth a discussion about how it expands and extends, while maintaining the framework and the relationships and the representation that is there through the formal structure of the UKJCW."

B: Also, our members would feel more involved in what we do, wouldn't they?

A: Yeah, exactly.

B: Well, they would know, not obviously what we do, but they would know more about what EWL are doing ..."

The second issue concerned the ways in which individuals are required to feedback.

"But then that requires writing up properly accountability mechanisms, because there's no point in people going off and doing their own thing, because it then has to be fed in and then down through all sorts of other people. And it takes a discussion."

"I've always [reflected upon] accountability in my role ... I sit in a lot of UK-wide conversations, but I'm very aware that I'm sitting at this European thing and how am I being held to account to make sure that I am being representative of what's going on in Northern Ireland, what's going on in Scotland? England is easy because I'm in those networks with England a lot more..."

"... I think it needs to be clear ... there needs to be boundaries around it and accountability frameworks and everything else..."

“... and the accountability of the individuals’ organisations to their members...”

“[Looking at how this national organisation communicates with its membership] they are actually doing it very well indeed. They communicate extremely well. The only thing that’s missing is in fact the European aspect because you are still electing them, the member, delegating the member to [the UKJCW] and eventually to the Lobby. That aspect has also fallen away a bit, we don’t hear anything. The membership doesn’t hear anything... your position is vis-à-vis the Lobby and the representation in the Lobby and how this is developing now. What would be helpful if there could be feedback to all three other members.”

All of this discussion sat as part of tightening the governance of the UKJCW as well as the management of documents (currently through a shared Dropbox) and the induction of new members, to introduce them to the principles and ways of working of the UKJCW.

Participants were clear that considerations about the future of the UKJCW and its position within European and international architecture needed to acknowledge the “unsettled” nature of the UK, particularly post-Brexit.

“What I can predict, and I don’t know what’s going to happen in Wales and Northern Ireland obviously, I don’t even know what’s going to happen in Scotland, but the conversation about carving another relationship with the EU outside Westminster is very lively here [in Edinburgh] and absolutely hitched to independence.”

Discussion highlighted that while the future of the UKJCW remains uncertain. This uncertainty represents a new chapter in the evolution of the organisation as feminist actors strategise and reposition themselves in the context of the UK’s newfound relationship with the EU, and the shifting dynamics of the UK’s own constitutional landscape.

Concluding Remarks

The many notable features and achievements of the UKJCW are a reflection of the remarkable women who not only made its formation as a four nations structure possible, but who continue to sustain it in the face of numerous challenges. With limited resources and slow means of communication, feminist civil society actors not only responded enthusiastically to the European Commission's proposal to establish the EWL, but they did so in such a way that was relatively unique by ensuring this four nations approach to the UK's representation. Such a partnership of equals structure marked a step-change away from a highly centralised model of interest representation that focussed on Westminster. It was not only about representing women from different corners of the UK, but it was also about ensuring adequate representation of different views within the feminist movement. The importance of this achievement should not be underestimated, not least because the establishing of the UKJCW predates the late-1990's process of political devolution across the UK. As is often the case, in the quest for equality and partnership, women prove themselves to be at the forefront of innovative and forward-thinking ideas, particularly in the context of representation and fairness.

Nevertheless, while the creation of the UKJCW is impressive, maintaining it, as well as the four sister organisations, has been a challenge. For example, the absence of financial resources from the EU (which itself is understandable given the European Commission's desire not to be perceived as interfering within the politics of the Member States) was not met with UK Government funding. Meanwhile, during the early years of devolution, political priorities across Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales did not necessarily lend themselves to (substantial) funding for feminist organisations. The need to 'keep the show on the road' and maintain the UKJCW required considerable (often voluntary) effort and this work frequently eclipsed policy considerations.

The post-2010 wave of austerity by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government exposed not just the vulnerable foundations upon which the UKJCW was built, but also the territorial differentiation, maturing political devolution, and changing nature of the British state over the preceding ten or so years. This post-2010 context was therefore one in which the challenges of the UKJCW were unevenly felt. In England, the abolition of the Women's National Commission in 2010 set the tone for a shift in fortunes for NAWO, which historically was the most well-resourced of the four organisations of the UKJCW, but post-2010 was, along with Northern Ireland, the least well-resourced. While Wales momentarily lost its organisation, opposition to such a move resulted in the creation of a successor that was more adequately funded by the Welsh Government. Meanwhile, Engender in Scotland, having secured funding from the Scottish Government, has emerged as the most well-resourced of the four organisations (although beyond this core funding, both Scottish and Welsh

organisations have sought to diversify their income). Empirically, the UKJCW is therefore a prism, knowledge and understanding of which not only captures developments within the British state over the last 30 years, but also enables us to reflect on their significance.

Related to issues of uncertainty and differentiation is the UK's vote to leave the EU in June 2016. The subsequent interpretation of this decision as a 'hard Brexit' by the Governments of both Theresa May and Boris Johnson potentially signalled the ending of the UKJCW. Again, innovative thinking amongst feminist actors both within the UKJCW, as well as the EWL, resulted in a continuation of the UK's participation within the EWL. This, itself, was not a forgone conclusion, given that the EWL was required to change its internal rules to enable the UK's membership to continue. Members of the UKJCW were particularly keen to continue their relationship with the EU, not least because of the hard-fought existence of the UKJCW, but also because the benefits for each organisation of the UKJCW being a member are important. The UK's less favourable political trajectory since the 2016 referendum serves to highlight the fragility of the gains made by all civil society actors in recent history, and thereby the importance of remaining plugged into Europe. Meanwhile, just as the outcome of the 2016 referendum was contested across the UK – in particular in Northern Ireland and Scotland where a majority voted in favour to remain within the EU – different organisations within the UKJCW envisage particular relationships with the EU in the future.

Finally, a recurrent theme of this report is that of the dedication, commitment, and sometimes sacrifice of the individuals involved. These were individuals who sought to represent women from across the UK, who saw the championing of women's voices within the EU's political arena as a route to improving women's lives. The efforts to build a stronger EU-level representative body were often made by hidden actors who are seldom known, let alone acknowledged. We hope this document not only captures part of their story but also provides a useful resource during a period of ongoing reflection both within the UKJCW and about the UK's relationship with the EU more broadly.

Some of the Women Behind the UKJCW

Most of the brief biographies below were drafted in advance of the June 2022 workshop. We are aware that there were – and are – many other wonderful women behind the UKJCW. We hope that their contributions are captured in later work.

Ivy Cameron: In 1990 as a national negotiator of the finance union, she was nominated by the TUC Women’s Committee as a member of the UKJCW. The European Commission’s DGV had given her a grant to design and deliver training in Europe which moved equality from a ‘woman’s problem’ to an organisational priority and responsibility.

Margaret Clark: Margaret is a member of NAWO and NAWO’s representative on the UKJCW.

Catherine Fookes: Catherine joined WEN Wales as Director in 2018 and is Wales’ representative on the UKJCW. Catherine is responsible for the overall strategic direction of WEN Wales and pushing forward WEN’s vision of a transformed Wales, free from gender discrimination. Since joining WEN Wales the organisation has grown its impact and its reach securing changes such as the Welsh Government committing to incorporating CEDAW and to bringing in legally binding gender quotas.

Jane Grant: Jane was the first Director of The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (NAWO) and heavily involved in the development of the EWL and the UKJCW. Since leaving NAWO she undertook a PhD on the governance of Women’s organisations at the University of Kent, and has acted as consultant to many women’s organisations and published two books on the women’s movement.

Bronagh Hinds: With a background as director and chair in the voluntary sector as well as in the European Network of Women and in discussions about the EWL, Bronagh founded NIWEP and served as its chair for 10 years. She was instrumental in the establishment of the UKJCW and represented Northern Ireland at UKJCW and EWL meetings. A co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, she was in the negotiations for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement after which, as Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, she led on implementing the Agreement’s equality provisions. She served as NI Commissioner on the UK Women’s National Commission and as a local government Commissioner in Northern Ireland. As DemocraShe’s Senior Associate she focuses on women, peace and security, equality and diversity in political and civic leadership, good governance and policy transformation. She works with governments, multilateral agencies, civil society and women and served as a UNW senior expert on women’s engagement in peace processes. She is also an Independent Assessor for the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Liz Law: Working for the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (an umbrella of NGOs), Liz provided local developmental support to NIWEP/UKJCW/EWL from inception (1988-1995). She was elected to the NIWEP board and then as NIWEP’s European representative (c.2000),

serving three terms as UK board member to EWL and EWL Treasurer 2008-2014. Liz is a board member of Women's Platform (previously the NIWEP).

Annette Lawson: Annette is an academic sociologist. She became Chair of Fawcett, Treasurer of the Women's Studies Network and later joined NAWO representing Fawcett originally. Within NAWO, she was elected as representative to the European Women's Lobby and hence was a member of the UKJCW. When EWL insisted on one umbrella per country and UKJCW became the member of the Lobby, she was in turn the NAWO rep for UKJCW as a whole at EWL. Annette was asked to stand for the executive of EWL and UKJCW members understood that for them to hold executive office might mean permitting a slower rotation. She held the UKJCW representation on EWL for the maximum of 6 years (three 2-year terms in a row permitted) and during that time was elected as EWL Vice-President with the Swedish President, Kirsti Koltoff.

Caroline McCamley: As a member of the Executive of the Council for the Status of Women (Ireland) (now the National Women's Council of Ireland CSW in Ireland [NWCII]), and Chairwoman from 1986, Caroline was the Irish lead at talks leading to the EWL. A consultant and facilitator, she works mainly with charitable/non-profit and public sector organisations.

Jonna Monaghan: Jonna is Director of Women's Platform and leads delivery of the organisation's strategic plan. Jonna is the Women's Platform representative on UKJCW and she is the current EWL Board member for the UK. In this role, she has also represented the UK on a working group on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Alys Mumford: Alys is the Communications and Engagement Manager at Engender. She has been a member of UKJCW as the Scotland alternate member since 2016, and took over the chairing of UKJCW in 2021. Alys has also been involved in various EWL workshops and initiatives for young feminists in Europe.

Mary Slater: Wales Women's National Coalition, an umbrella network for women's organisations in Wales, was established in 2001 by the then Welsh Assembly under the Assembly's statutory equality of opportunity duty. Mary was the manager of the Coalition from 2001 to 2005 and, for a period, the Wales nominee to the UKJCW and the EWL.

Gwendolyn Sterk: Gwendolyn Sterk is Director of Business Development and Partnerships for Cardiff Women's Aid. Gwendolyn has been active in strategic policy and development in the violence against women and girls sector in England and Wales for over a decade and is the UK expert on the European Women's Lobby Observatory of Violence against Women and Girls.

Mhairi Stewart: Mhairi was a founding member of Women's Forum Scotland representing her Trade Union. She was involved in the UKJCW from 1992 and was Scotland's delegate to the EWL from 1999 to 2002.

Gabrielle Suff: Gabrielle was a founder member of WWEN (Wales Women's European Network) which was formed to represent Women's organisations in Wales at UKJCW in June 1990. She attended on behalf of BFWG (British Federation of Women Graduates), which had a

Local association in Swansea. She became Chair of WWEN. Gabrielle represented WWEN at all the meetings of UKJCW between 1996 – 2000 and represented the UKJCW at all the Annual Meetings of EWL.

Lesley Sutherland: Lesley participated in the four nation discussions (1989-1990), representing Scotland, and helped draft the original UKJCW Concordat. She was deeply involved in founding Women's Forum Scotland, serving variously as board member and convener and, subsequently, was a Board member of Engender until 2017. The UKJCW agreed to nominate Lesley as the UK board member at the inaugural European Women's Lobby in 1990, a position she held for three terms (1990-96); she was also Treasurer of the Lobby 1994-96. Altogether, she was involved in the UKJCW, from its inception, in various roles for over 10 years.

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Appendix 1) Acronyms

- Beijing – Beijing Platform for Action
- CEDAW – United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CSW – United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
- CSW (Ireland) – Council for the Status of Women (Ireland), now the National Women’s Council of Ireland
- ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council
- EWL – European Women’s Lobby
- NCVO – National Council for Voluntary Organisations (UK)
- NICVA – Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
- NIWC – Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition
- NWC – National Women’s Council of Ireland
- TUC – Trade Union Congress
- UKJCW – UK Joint Committee on Women
- WCVA – Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- WEN Wales – Women’s Equality Network Wales
- WFS – Women’s Forum Scotland
- WNC – Women’s National Commission (UK)
- WRC – Women’s Resource Centre
- WWEN – Wales Women’s European Network
- WWNC – Wales Women’s National Coalition

Appendix 2) Agenda for the Workshop

Workshop on the UK Joint Committee on Women

9.30am – 5.30pm on Friday, 9th June at the Park Plaza hotel, Cardiff
Sponsored by the James Madison Charitable Trust

Workshop aims

This workshop aims to increase our understanding of how feminist civil society organisations in the UK have evolved in function of the UK's membership of the European Union (EU), focusing on the UK's Joint Committee of Women (UKJCW).

All workshop participants have been or are currently affiliated with the UKJCW. Through the course of discussion and exchange between workshop participants, this workshop seeks to:

- 1) Capture the history of the UKJCW, from its establishment in 1990 to the present day;
- 2) Understand how the UKJCW has evolved over time, with reference to the relationships between the four organisations and, in turn, their relationship/s with the EWL;
- 3) Explore how the activity of the UKJCW members has been “Europeanised” over time;
- 4) Explore the impact of Brexit on the intra-UK working between the four organisations and also with the EWL; and on the potential “de-Europeanisation” of UKJCW activity (and the implications of this).

Agenda

9.30am – 10.00am	Coffee and pastries
10.00am – 10.30am	Introductions and welcome (30 minutes)
10.30am – 11.30am	Session 1: Establishing the UKJCW (60 minutes)
11.30am – 12.00pm	Break (30 minutes)
12.00pm – 1.00pm	Session 2: An evolving partnership of equals (60 minutes)
1.00pm – 2.00pm	Lunch (60 minutes)
2.00pm – 3.30pm	Session 3: Brexit and the UKJCW (90 minutes)
3.30pm – 4.00pm	Break (30 minutes)
4.00pm – 5.30pm	Session 4: Reflections (90 minutes)
7.30pm	Dinner

By Paul Copeland and Rachel Minto

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