

<b>Institution:</b> LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> AREA STUDIES		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Diversity in political representation and participation in Wales		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014 - 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof. DIANA STIRBU	Professor of Public Policy and Governance	2010 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

### 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

This body of research has resulted in **impacts on policy, law and services**. It investigated the role of institutions in shaping diversity in political representation in Wales. Prof. Stirbu identified Welsh specific constitutional and institutional determinants of electoral opportunity for underrepresented groups, and structural, political and individual factors shaping individuals' journey into politics. These insights have:

- improved the evidence base and supported the Remuneration Board of the Senedd Cymru to shape the focus of inquiries in relation to its remuneration package;
- supported parliamentarians scrutinise Welsh legislation in relation to electoral reform;
- stimulated and informed debates by raising issues in relation to political diversity and broader constitutional change in Wales.

### 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The issue of diversity in political representation has traditionally been approached through the lens of supply and demand factors underpinning a) how political, institutional and systemic 'gatekeepers' determine eligibility and desirability of political candidates, and b) how personal and cultural factors motivate individuals to seek political office. Innovative research by Stirbu and collaborators explore these dynamics within two novel contexts:

1. the new democratic space in Wales post devolution, which has been characterised by a significant constitutional flux (thus bringing about opportunities for change)
2. the internal governance structures, processes and institutional capacity underpinning the work of the Senedd Cymru (Welsh Parliament), formerly the National Assembly of Wales, over the last two decades.

The research falls within two broad themes exploring:

- role of administrative governance structures and processes in shaping diversity outcomes in political representation in the context of new political institutions;
- the changing pathways into politics and the lived experiences that shape this journey.

The research was undertaken by: Prof. Diana Stirbu with Prof. L. McAllister from Cardiff University, Dr. M. Cole (University of Liverpool) and Dr. J. Lamer (Cardiff University) between 2005 to present, and, by Stirbu with Prof. R. Awan-Scully and Dr. H. Pritchard from Cardiff University between 2017 and 2019.

Stirbu co-led, with Awan-Scully, and Pritchard, an inquiry into the barriers faced by individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, along the journey from eligibility to gaining political office [R3]. The

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Remuneration Board commissioned the research in order to support and enhance their understanding of potential barriers towards a more diverse representation in the Senedd as they embarked on setting the Determination for its 6th term. The context in which the research was conducted is significant as the 2017 Wales Act devolved matters related to the electoral arrangements and size to the Senedd. This set in motion an extensive programme of constitutional and electoral reform, with the appointment of the Expert Panel on Assembly's Electoral Reform (in February 2017), the Panel's reporting and recommendations (November 2017) and a substantive two phase Senedd reform programme (from February 2018) covering electoral and structural changes with a potential to diversify politics in Wales. Within this context, the Determination for the 6th Senedd (the pay, allowance, office support and rules around claiming expenses) has been critical to this agenda given its implications on institutional capacity, staffing and more importantly, and on how attractive the job of being a Senedd Member is for a wider range of diverse individuals. The study commissioned by the Remuneration Board and co-led by Stirbu [R6] exposes deep systemic, cultural and political factors affecting the journey into politics of individuals from underrepresented groups, and offers unprecedented insights into their lived experience of becoming politically active. The report produced 11 recommendations that covered: the nature of the job, support for politicians and other diversity barriers. Stirbu brought crucial gender, diversity, Welsh specific institutionalist expertise and participatory qualitative methodological expertise to the inquiry team. The findings of the research highlighted the importance of aligning childcare support with the working pattern of Members (including their commuting time), suggested a revision of exceptional expenses in relation to disability, promotions and trials around job share, and facilitating remote working.

This work builds on Stirbu's earlier institutional and gender research into the maturing of the Senedd as a political institution. With McAllister [R6], Stirbu posited that devolution acted as a 'laboratory for gender innovation' and a catalyst for political parties to embrace positive action that led to positive electoral outcomes for women in Wales, namely record levels of representation in the Senedd. This has never fallen below 40% since 1999 and stood at 48% (as of July 2020), in stark contrast with the pre-devolution era, when there were only 4 women MPs elected in the House of Commons from Welsh constituencies between 1929 and 1997. This sets the novel context in which, subsequently, the authors, with Cole, raise important questions around the Senedd's institutional capacity [R5] and the impact on the quality of scrutiny, legislative process and representation [R1]. Stirbu et al then reinforced concerns around diversity, calibre of representation and the sustainability of the progressive equality agenda in Wales [R2]. In relation to the latter, Stirbu and McAllister were the first to question the pitfalls and lack of adequate proportionality of the Welsh electoral system [R4], with repercussions on the Assembly's overall diversity. Additionally, they [R2] argue that addressing persisting issues around lack of diversity at other levels of political representation in Wales, requires embedding equality guarantees at constitutional and institutional levels.

The collaboration between Stirbu, McAllister and Lerner is underpinned by their individual contribution: institutional, procedural and strategic focus from Stirbu; political and constitutional focus from McAllister, and a quantitative data analysis focus from Lerner.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

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- R1. Stirbu, D. and McAllister, L. (2018) - Chronicling National Assembly Committees as Markers of Institutional Change, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, October 2018, DOI: 10.1080/13572334.2018.1516606
- R2. Stirbu, D., Lerner, J. and McAllister, L. (2018) - 'Gender Representation in Wales: New Approaches to Candidate Selection in UK's Devolved Legislatures and Beyond', in Cordero and Collier (eds.) *Democratising Candidate Selection. New Methods, Old receipts?*, Palgrave Macmillan. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-76550-1\_9
- R3. Scully, R., Stirbu, S. and Pritchard, W. (2018) - 'Unpacking Diversity. Barriers and Incentives in Standing for Election to the National Assembly for Wales', Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales.
- R4. Stirbu, D. and McAllister, L. (2016) 'If It's Broken, Fix It. Time to rethink the AMS Electoral System in Wales', LSE Democratic Audit UK blog, online, URL: <https://tinyurl.com/y6ytx6ux>
- R5. Cole, M., McAllister, L. and Stirbu, D. 2013. *The Capacity of the National Assembly*. In:

Osmond, J. and Upton, S. (eds.), A Stable, Sustainable Settlement for Wales. Cardiff: UK Changing Union Partnership. pp. 6-18. .

R6.McAllister, L. and Stirbu, D.S. (2007) - 'Opportunities for Gender Innovations in a New Political Space', The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, vol. 1, no.5, 11-18. DOI:10.18848/1833-1882/CGP/v01i05/53049 (H Index: 12, SJR (2007) 0.139, Q3 (PIR))

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

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Prof. Stirbu's research shaped debates around diversity and gender representation in Wales which has led to changes to the Senedd's remuneration policy, improved legislative scrutiny and informed the wider discussion of participation and representation in Wales. The context in which this impact has occurred is marked by a series of constitutional and institutional developments such as: 1) Wales Act 2017 devolving powers to change electoral arrangements of the Senedd Cymru, 2) the work of the Expert Panel on Senedd's Electoral Reform (2017) which looked at changing the electoral system in Wales, increasing the size of the Senedd, and extending the electoral franchise in Senedd elections, 3) the Remuneration Board's work on the determination for the 6th Assembly (2018-2020) and 4) the work of the Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform (2020).

**The primary beneficiaries** of the research include: the Remuneration Board of the Senedd, the Senedd's Commission and the Senedd Committee on Electoral Reform. The Commission is the Senedd's main corporate governance and leadership body - it is led by the Presiding Officer and is the initiator and sponsor of the Senedd's reform programme. The Remuneration Board is the independent body responsible for ensuring that Members of the Senedd have the right remuneration and resources to conduct their jobs properly, while remaining accountable to the people of Wales. The Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform was established on 18 September 2019 to examine the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform. In addition to these primary beneficiaries, secondary beneficiaries include: Senedd Members (SMs) and officials, political parties in Wales and beyond, think-tanks operating in Wales (such as the Institute of Welsh Affairs, ERS Cymru), and political correspondents.

**Impact on the Senedd's remuneration policy (2018 - 2020)** Stirbu et al's report (Unpacking Diversity) [R3] was published in July 2018 and made 11 recommendations to the Senedd Remuneration Board. The findings informed the Board's work and deliberations in the context of its review for the Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances for the 6th Senedd. These discussions were held in Board meetings throughout 2018 to 2020. Consultations initiated by the Board debated the merits of the report's recommendations, specifically changes for childcare and other care support, revision of exceptional expenses in relation to disability, job share etc [S1].

*The research enhanced the Board's understanding of specific barriers encountered by potential candidates, as well as Members on their journey from candidacy to serving in the Senedd. [S1]*

The Board published its Draft Determination [S3] on 5th February 2020 and acknowledged, in its press release [S4], that Stirbu's work on barriers and incentives to standing in Senedd elections had informed the current proposals, which are

*“ensuring that the support and remuneration offered to Members do not deter people from standing for election to the Senedd. [...] The proposals have been informed by research commissioned by the Board into the barriers and incentives to standing for election to the Senedd” [S4].*

In particular, the consultation report on part three of the Review of Determination [S8] discusses in great detail the recommendations made by Stirbu et al. The findings and recommendations that have been considered and ultimately incorporated in the Draft Determination include the following improvements to SMs' remuneration package:

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- That the salary level for SMs is appropriate.
- Revision of exceptional expenses system (disability) - The Draft determination includes an allowance for Members to help meet costs in relation to a disability or disabilities.
- Revision of child care and care support for SMs to reflect Senedd's Sitting time and working hours - The Draft Determination proposes a contribution towards care costs for children and/or dependents when Members are required to work beyond normal hours.

The Final Determination was published in June 2020 and will take effect in May 2021 after the Senedd elections.

### Assisting the legislative scrutiny process

Within Welsh politics, questions about the Senedd's small size and capacity implications for diversity have been debated for the two decades since the institution was founded. Stirbu has been a significant contributor to this evidence base since 2007 and, over the years, her contributions have been called upon at various inflection points in Wales' constitutional journey.

Most recently, in January 2020, Stirbu appeared as an expert witness in front of the Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform. Stirbu emphasized the implications of ongoing limited Senedd capacity on the diversity of candidates it may attract in the next elections, raising the issue of increased workload for the 6th Senedd in the context of Brexit. Stirbu also played back the findings of the Unpacking Diversity Report [R3] to the committee members. During the proceedings [S8], committee members used previous work on institutional capacity [R5] by Stirbu et al to inform their questions to the panel witnesses. Additionally, during the deliberations of the same committee, evidence from Stirbu et al's research [R3] was cited by Prof. Rosie Campbell during her response questions on diversity implications of an enlarged Assembly [section 106 S10]. Moreover, the Committee's report [S9] makes 12 references to Stirbu's oral evidence and quotes her contribution to the debate on diversity:

*Professor Stirbu suggested that consideration needed to be given to both non-political and party political mentoring for candidates or people who might be interested in becoming candidates. In its response to our consultation, Welsh Labour suggested that grants should be made available to political parties wishing to support or mentor people from underrepresented groups with a view to increasing participation in party politics or candidate diversity. [Section 239 of S9]*

The committees' report recommendations rehearse at least three of the recommendations made by Stirbu (with Awan-Scully and Pritchard around diversity), including further consideration of job-share, the creation of an access to politics fund to support people with disabilities, rules on childcare support and expenses [S9]. The 6<sup>th</sup> Senedd (from May 2021) will look at the implementation of the committee's recommendations.

### Contributing to wider understanding of political participation and representation in Wales beyond the academy (2014-2018)

Stirbu's research findings have also been used more widely, beyond the academy. Her research findings have informed the work of NGOs (ERS Cymru, Institute of Welsh Affairs). One such example comes from the **ERS Cymru**, an independent campaigning organisation advocating for voters' rights, and the Welsh Branch of the UK-wide Electoral Reform Society, whose registered subscriber numbers for 2019 reached 56,400. The ERS Cymru's 2018 report **New Voices** [S6] endorses one of the recommendations put forth by Stirbu et al. In her testimonial, Jess Blair, the Director of ERS Cymru, notes that

*"It is clear that this research [R3] has offered evidence that other organisations, such as ourselves, have learned from and developed further thinking on and as such has had a*

*clear impact on the diversity agenda in Wales*" [S2].

Furthermore, election analysis (from both Stirbu and McAllister) prior and after (Stirbu) the 2017 General elections, was featured in commentary in the media. The BBC News website (with 40,584 unique visits) also ran a piece [S5] on the number of female Welsh MPs, with commentary from Stirbu, who clarified structural factors explaining discrepancies between the UK Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales in terms of gender representation.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

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- S1. Corroborating Statement from the Chair of the Remuneration Panel of the National Assembly for Wales
- S2. Corroborating statement from Jess Blair, ERS Cymru Director
- S3. National Assembly Remuneration Board, February 2020, Determination of the 6th Assembly (Draft), URL: <https://www.remunerationboard.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Determination-en.pdf>
- S4. National Assembly Remuneration Board, Press Release [ date] <https://www.remunerationboard.wales/review-of-the-determination-for-the-sixth-assembly-consultation-on-draft-determination/>
- S5. BBC News article quoting Prof. Stirbu. *Largest number of female Welsh MPs elected*, 9 June 2017, URL: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-40218112>
- S6. ERS Cymru Report 2018 New Voices How Welsh politics can begin to reflect Wales: <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/publications/new-voices-how-welsh-politics-can-begin-to-reflect-wales/>
- S7. National Assembly Remuneration Board, September 2019, Review of the Determination for the Sixth Assembly: Consultation on part three of the review, URL: <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s94100/Consultation.pdf>
- S8. Verbatim transcript Oral evidence session 20 January 2020 <https://record.assembly.wales/Committee/6027>
- S9. 'The Senedd reform: The Next Steps'. Report of the Committee on Senedd Electoral Reform, September 2020, online, URL: <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13452/cr-ld13452%20-e.pdf>
- S10. Verbatim transcript Oral evidence session 13 January 2020 <https://record.assembly.wales/Committee/6026>