

Catalonia Progressive Forum 10-11th July 2022 Report by Adam Price MS

Purpose of the Visit

I was invited to attend and take part in the first edition of the Catalonia Progressive Forum, a meeting point for progressive political parties to discuss and address the European and global challenges that we must most urgently respond to. The forum was held in Barcelona on the 10th and 11th June 2022. The forum provides the opportunity to foster common values, including feminism, social justice, the green transition, and human rights and democracy, throughout the world. These are all issues which have been raised as issues of priority by members of the 6th Senedd, across all parties, both in and outside of Government.



This year's forum entitled 'No stepping back: defending democracy in the 21st century', was dedicated to reflecting on how to defend our democracies and the fundamental values that support them before such phenomena as the return of the far right, the rise of populism, disinformation and counter-democratic power.

Whilst accommodation costs were covered by the event organisers, travel expenses were covered by the Senedd, in line with the Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances as set out by the Remuneration

Board. The visit was declared and published through the Register of Members Interests with the Table Office immediately following my return to Wales, and in line with Senedd rules and guidance, this follow-up report briefly outlines further information regarding the forum and the discussions held.

Esquerra Republicana

The forum was hosted by Esquerra Republicana. Esquerra Republicana defines itself as left-wing, green and feminist, defending the right to self-determination for Catalonia. Historically, the party has been a paradigmatic defender of democracy and republicanism. Esquerra is currently the foremost political party in Catalonia in municipal, regional, state and European elections. In addition, since 2021, the party has held the presidency of the Generalitat, the government of Catalonia, presided by Pere Aragonès. At the European level, Esquerra is a member of the European Free Alliance party and the Greens/EFA European Parliamentary Group.

General Forum Discussions

A roundtable on democracy and authoritarianism discussed and suggested solutions as to how we protect ourselves from the rise of policy options evoking authoritarianism, and how progressive parties can present solutions for defending democratic values.

A further roundtable event on human rights discussed and suggested solutions as to how we can ensure greater respect for these fundamental rights, especially with the movement of refugees across Europe as a result of conflicts in Ukraine and elsewhere across the world.

With the reform of our democracy firmly on the Senedd's agenda for the coming years, this international forum provided a unique opportunity to learn about how we can protect Welsh political institutions and election systems from nefarious threats in years to come.

More democracy and better information: how to improve the quality of democracies in the face of misinformation strategies - Round Table Discussion

I was a panel member for a round table event on disinformation. Other panellists included:

- Diana Riba, Esquerra Republicana MEP
- Stéphane Bergeron, MP for Bloc Québécois
- Christian Allard, former MEP and SNP councillor for Aberdeen City Council
- Sonia Galtí, member of the Catalan Council of the European Movement
- Jordi Vilanova, member of the International Affairs Committee of Esquerra Republicana

There have been very credible allegations of questionable uses of social media to influence elections across Western nations. The spread of disinformation and misinformation via social media is not something Wales can be complacent about. I was able to promote work done in Wales, such as by the IWA which has looked at how Wales can lead the way in tackling misinformation in the media and wider society.

The panel discussed the measures states and international bodies can take to guarantee freedom of expression while protecting the quality of the information we receive. Other topics of discussion included what measures could be used to help stop disinformation strategies during electoral campaigns. I also discussed initiatives that could be taken in Wales and other UK nations to further protect our electoral systems following the Cambridge Analytica Scandal.

