



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER
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PRESS RELEASE

No: 349/2014

Date: 9th July 2014

Government lays foundations for expansion of Brussels office

The Government is set to expand the premises, the team and the function of the Gibraltar office in Brussels. The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia and the Gibraltar delegation have spent part of their time identifying suitable premises in the EU capital which can serve as the platform from which this project can get off the ground.

The Gibraltar team included Chief Legal Adviser Michael Llamas QC, Principal Secretary Caine Sanchez and PA Ernest Francis.

There are a number of regions of Europe with representation of their own in Brussels. This includes, for instance, a huge building that houses the Catalan representation. There are also offices for many individual German states and it is relevant to note that regions like Cornwall and the South West of England also have offices of their own.

In addition to progressing the new office, Dr Garcia has continued lobbying members of the European Parliament on EU issues affecting Gibraltar within a few days of these MEPs formally taking office.

The Deputy Chief Minister was able to brief the two UKIP Members of the European Parliament for the Southwest and Gibraltar, William Dartmouth and Julia Reid, on the situation at the border following the second inspection visit on the part of the European Commission.

These and other issues were also discussed with newly elected Green MEP for the region Molly Scott Cato who sits on the Environment Committee. She was also briefed on a number of environmental matters involving Gibraltar and the EU, like the continuing sewage contamination from Spain into Western Beach. Dr Garcia explained that a complaint made against Spain from Gibraltar many years ago had still not been determined by the Commission.

The meetings with MEPs were not confined to those representing Gibraltar. The delegation was also able to meet with the Secretariat and some MEPs of the European Free Alliance, which includes Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

Commenting on the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

"The Government took advantage of our time in Brussels in order to progress a number of issues. This included the meeting with the EU Commissioner on Monday in order to discuss the continuing problems at the border and an early opportunity to brief MEPs on the latest developments.

I am pleased to report that the MEPs have been extremely supportive of Gibraltar and a number of parallel strategies are now expected to develop as a result. The Government considered that it was important to get in there early and this is what we have done.

A third strand to the visit was to take further the expansion of the Gibraltar office in Brussels.

The Government is very pleased with the way that the visit has gone and we look forward to building on this in the coming months ahead."