



PRESS RELEASE

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Office in Brussels to be officially opened next month says Garcia

The new Gibraltar House in Brussels will be officially opened next month. This follows from the Deputy Chief Minister's visit this week and the completion of the move from the old office to the new one.

The office will house five persons at the outset. This will include Sir Graham Watson and lawyer Daniel D'Amato, who has been seconded to work there from the European Union and International Department (EUID). The rest of the staff have been locally recruited, one of whom was already in the old office, and two others are interns from the very successful programme that serves the EU institutions and other organisations in Brussels. The intention at present is for these to be short-term posts, as is common elsewhere, which will be renewed every few months.

Apart from finalising arrangements for the official opening of the office, Dr Garcia had a busy schedule of 17 meetings and engagements in two days. The visit was focused on three specific areas, these being taxation, aviation and the border.

The Deputy Chief Minister was able to raise these issues with MEPs from a number of different countries and from different political groups. This was found to be extremely useful because many of them had not heard the Gibraltar point of view face to face before. Dr Garcia met MEPs from Germany, France, Poland, Hungary, Romania and the United Kingdom. This included three Vice Chairs of the Transport Committee, which deals with aviation, three Group Co-ordinations on the same subject and a Rapporteur. Dr Garcia met MEPs from the European People's Party, Socialist Group, Liberal Group, Conservative ECR Group, Greens and the EFA UKIP Group.

There were also a number of key MEPs who were briefed on taxation issues. This follows the setting up by the European Parliament earlier this year of a special Committee to look into the question of tax rulings following the "Luxileaks" revelations. The Government felt that it was important to make clear the position of Gibraltar as a compliant part of the European Union whose financial services and regulatory regime have received the seal of approval from a number of international bodies.

The third aspect of the visit were the continuing delays at the border and the disruptive nature of the works on the Spanish side which are compounding the problem. This was explained directly to the Commissioner responsible for Migration and Border Management Dimitris Avramopolous.



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

"It is very important to step up our presence in Brussels and to put across the Gibraltar point of view to as many people as possible.

In particular on aviation issues, it is important to make it absolutely clear that the current impasse has not been created by Gibraltar or by the United Kingdom. It is Spain that has created the problem when they decided not to honour a solution that had been arrived at in 2006. This message has been delivered to everyone I met.

On the border, the onus is clearly on Madrid to complete the infrastructure and other recommendations made by the European Commission. This is taking a considerable amount of time. It will be recalled that the first inspection visit took place in September 2013. In the meantime, EU nationals and others continue to wait for an unacceptable length of time to cross from Spain into Gibraltar or vice-versa.

The Government will continue to take our case to the European institutions. This kind of lobbying takes time and it does not produce instant results but it is important to make a start."