



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

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Ms. Chloe Smith MP
Minister for the Constitution
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

27 February 2018

Dear Chloe,

Gender Diversity Data for Political Parties

Doc. I2308/17: Proposal for a Regulation on the Statute and Funding of European Political Parties and European Political Foundations

Doc. I6004/17: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No. 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations Opinion of the European Court of Auditors

Thank you for your Explanatory Memorandum dated 29 January 2018 which was considered by the EU Justice Sub-Committee at its meeting of 27 February. We decided to clear the Court of Auditors Opinion from scrutiny. However, we are writing in respect of the underlying Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties which we retain under scrutiny.

The Government was well aware of our views about its position on the proposal for the publication of gender diversity data by national political parties. In December 2017 we wrote indicating that we remained “mystified by the Government’s negative stance on the proposal for the publication of gender diversity data.” At that time, we stated that the publication of this data was a matter of public interest. We added that given that it is essentially public money that is being provided to European Political Parties we saw no reason why this should only be done on a voluntary basis.

In previous correspondence with the Committee the Government accepted that any regulatory burden on parties would be small and that UK political parties would only be affected for a short period of time. We understood that the UK Government “would not seek to raise major concerns about this point”; but that it would be seeking clarification on the drafting of the proposal and that it intended to discuss it with political parties. We were therefore surprised and disappointed to receive notice that the Government appears to be

endorsing revisions to the text which would remove the reference to national political parties needing to provide the relevant diversity information.

On 6 February the Prime Minister gave a speech at Westminster Hall marking the centenary of the introduction of votes for women. During the course of her speech, she said that she wanted “to see more women in politics and government because greater female representation makes a real difference to everyone’s lives.” It is difficult to see how the approach pursued by the Government aligns with this aim: in truth it seems to run completely contrary to such an ambition.

We look forward to your response to this letter and our previous correspondence on this issue in ten days.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee; Lynn Gardner, Clerk to the European Scrutiny Committee; Arnold Ridout, Legal Adviser to the European Scrutiny Committee; and Les Saunders, Department for Exiting the European Union.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Boswell

Lord Boswell of Aynho
Chairman of the European Union Committee