# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Visit to Berlin, 5&6 September 2018** |
| **DATE** | **18 September 2018** |
| **BY** | **Rt Hon Carwyn Jones, First Minister** |

This is to update Members on my recent visit to Germany, the main purpose of which was to officially open the new Welsh Government office in Berlin. The Berlin office is now up and running, and already making good contacts, and our office in Dusseldorf will also be up and running in the next few weeks.

Germany is an important economic market for Wales given that it is the largest source of European foreign direct investment into Wales and the largest global market for Welsh exports. The value of Welsh exports to Germany in 2017 was £3.2bn, an increase of 8% on the value of exports to Germany in 2016.

The Welsh Government's new presence in Berlin and Dusseldorf sends a loud and clear signal to our German and European partners - Wales is open for business and that we are determined to see our positive relationships with countries in the EU and with the EU continue post-Brexit. Opening these offices in Germany was warmly welcomed by German business representatives, and politicians alike.

In my meetings with German companies, Ministers and the BDI (the German equivalent of the CBI), all the discussions were dominated by Brexit - and there was growing and significant concern about the possibility of a no-Deal Brexit. The BDI meeting also focused on manufacturing, A.I. and future opportunities for European businesses.

We had a very productive meeting with the Head of Industrial and Economic Policy at Volkswagen. The German car industry, once lauded by Brexiteers as a key ally in their endeavours, is deeply concerned about developments so far. At the moment the company is planning for all scenarios and he expressed a clear desire for the industry to see more detail. We also had a helpful and insightful discussion on the future of the global car industry.

Before the official opening of the Welsh Government office I met the British Ambassador, Sir Sebastian Wood, who provided us with a warm welcome, commented on the fast start being made by our new presence in Berlin, and gave us a good insight into the current political and economic situation in Germany.

As well as meetings with the BDI and the State Minister for Europe I met Monika von der Lippe, the Brandenburg State Representative/coordinator for Equality. We had a broad discussion on gender and equalities policies, sharing experiences of driving through change. We talked about the Welsh Government’s stated aim of becoming a feminist Government and the legislative approach being taken forwards in Germany.

Increasing our presence in Germany will allow us to pursue new trade and investment opportunities, build on existing networks and boost Wales' profile. Closer links will also allow us to better explore stronger cultural and policy relationships. This has never been more important as we face a future outside of the European Union. The opening of our new offices forms part of an expansion of the Welsh Government's overseas operations to protect existing markets, pursue new investment opportunities, and promote Wales to the world.