

MEETING MINUTES

Cross Party Group on Germany

Wednesday, 27th January 2016, 5.30pm

Committee Room 3

Tentative Next Meeting

Wednesday, 2nd March 2016, 5.30pm

Committee Room 4

Attendees

Colin Beattie MSP, Scottish Parliament
John Clifford, Hon. Austrian Consulate
Graeme Henderson, Scottish Parliament
Colin Imrie, Scottish Government
Colin Keir MSP, Scottish Parliament
Peter Müller-McDougall, Swiss Consulate General
Stephen Penman, Berlitz International
David Scrimgeour, Scottish/German business advisor
Angela Shapiro, Gathering The Voices
Jens-Peter Voss, Consul General of Germany
Petra Wend, Queen Margaret University

Apologies Eleoma Bodammer, Petra Biberbach, Cameron Buchanan MSP, Manuela Calchini, Annette Götzkes, Nikolai Petersen, Heinrich Schnettger, Barbara Strickland, James Trolland.

Colin Beattie (CBe) opened the meeting at 17.40.

Topics Discussed:

Gathering The Voices Association

CB welcomed Angela Shapiro (AS) from the Gathering the Voices Association, a volunteer-led organisation that documents the testimony of survivors of the Holocaust. AS gave the group a presentation on the work of the Association, focussing on topics including:

- The background of the Association's members and its formation
- Examples of how the testimonies are digitised and preserved on the Association's website
- How the Association collaborates with students to create games, design memoir covers etc.
- The work the Association does with schools and teachers
- The mobile exhibition the Association created, which features snapshots of each survivor and their story
- The Association's future plans

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CB asked how the Association plans to ensure longevity of the survivors' stories for future generations. AS responded that digitisation and providing ease of access to the website were key in this regards. AS noted that the British Library has offered to host the website to help ensure its permanence. Peter Müller-McDougall (PMcD) asked if the material was likely to be translated into other languages. AS stated that this was dependent on cost, and that there was a glossary on the website.

CB asked how the work of the Association would be kept going forward by future generations. AS stated that they are working with 'young ambassadors' to go into schools and keep the work going into the future. CB queried how the Association would respond to changes in digital media in the future. AS answered that their work with computing students would help keep them involved in changes in media, and that their physical archive would be made available in relevant centres.

Stephen Penman (SP) asked how the Association ensured that primary school children were given a suitable context for presentations. AS spoke of how the Association had collaborated with primary school teachers to ensure the context would be appropriate. AS also mentioned how such presentations would focus more on social history, such as diet, rather than on the 'horrors' of the Holocaust.

CB thanked AS for meeting with the CPG.

David Scrimgeour – Scottish/German business advisor

CB thanked David Scrimgeour (DS) for meeting with the Group. DS spoke to the Group on the current state of business ties between Scotland and Bavaria, including:

- His own background as a lawyer then business advisor
- The need to improve Scotland's level of business engagement with Germany, and Bavaria in particular
- A comparison between business levels in Scotland and Bavaria
- The relative lack of internationalisation by Scottish businesses in comparison to German levels, and the Scottish Government's approach to improving this
- The importance of the EU market to Scotland, especially in the context of the potential Brexit
- How twinning between cities could play a part in improving business relations

CB asked why Scotland should focus on Bavaria, and not the whole of Germany. DS noted that the Scottish Government wants relations with the whole of Germany, but size and protocol aspects could make this difficult. DS believed that Bavaria's goodwill to Scotland, combined with its interesting economy, strong start-up sector and strength of identity would make Bavaria a more suitable target.

Colin Keir (CK) asked what reception Scottish companies had given DS when he had discussed setting up in Bavaria/Germany with them. DS said it has been changing and is more encouraging now; younger companies have a different attitude to international relations. DS also mentioned that the German market is much more accessible and visible than it used to be.

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CK asked if cultural differences were the main barrier to companies setting up in Germany. DS said that it varies, but that the German market could be very competitive and intimidating and there was a requirement for companies to innovate. DS gave Virgin as an example of a company with no German presence. However, DS also mentioned that the use of English had increased exponentially, especially among technological courses.

John Clifford (JC) noted that Scottish students often didn't feel they had the language skills to study abroad. DS said that ideally children would be integrated with languages at a young age to build confidence.

CS thanked DS for meeting with the Group.

Approval of previous minutes

The Group approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

Other Business

The Group agreed to disregard agenda item 4.

AOB

The Group agreed to examine Wednesday 2nd March as a potential CPG meeting date prior to dissolution.

CB closed the meeting at 19.05.