

Meeting Minutes

Cross Party Group on Germany

18 April 2012

Meeting Room TG.20

Next Meeting 2nd Meeting of CPG on Germany
Wednesday, 30th May
5:15 – 6:15
Q1.03

Attendees Colin Beattie MSP, Wolfgang Mössinger, Maureen Watt MSP, Gordon Macdonald MSP, Colin Keir MSP, Petra Wend, Louise Gardiner, Max Scharbert, James Trolland.

Apologies David McLetchie MSP, Drew Smith MSP, John Pentland MSP, Jamie McGrigor MSP

Forthcoming Visits: Wolfgang Mössinger, Consul General of Federal Republic of Germany

16th-18th May Bavarian Education Minister, Dr. Ludwig Spaenle, in Scotland for a debate on “cultural identities” at the University of Glasgow. in the afternoon of 17 May.
Possible evening event on the 16th May (Please keep diaries open)
Event on 16th May cancelled; but Mr Spaenle will be in the Parliament on 17 May in the morning, incl. FMQT.

22nd May German-Scottish Lawyers Association Symposium –
“Doing Business in Germany”
3:00-7:00pm
Edinburgh International Conference Centre

6-7th June Prime Minister of Lower Saxony David McAllister– a delegation of 19 will be coming with him
He wishes to meet the CPG on Thursday, 7th June from 10:45-11:45 (Please keep your diaries clear); I can confirm that this slot in McAllister’s programme has been allocated to a meeting with the CPG.

Topics to Discussion:

Political Reviewed the previous meeting of the delegation from the Bundestag.

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- The delegation left divided on the issue of Independence. Some agreeing and some not.
- Fiona Hyslop was invited as a result by both the Social Democrats and Conservative to visit the Bundestag.
- The consensus between the German parties was noted in regards to taxes and harmonisation.
- The CPG will raise the issue of booking appointments when foreign delegations come to the Parliament

Agreement that the Austrian and Swiss Consulates would be invited to meetings as participating observers.

Cultural

Promoting German language through education

- Year of outgoing positively surprised that the NUS supports
- Problems with getting the students to take placements and participate in exchanges – Note the emphasis made in schools to encourage language education and international experiences
- There is work to establish a national Scottish agency to promote and regulate international exchanges.
- Universities determine whether a year at a foreign University counts towards the degree. There have been cases where students refuse to go abroad because the year away will not count towards their degree. Furthermore, SAAS will support studies outside Scotland only if required by the curriculum, and maximum to one year.
- Continuation of the bursaries upon returning to Scottish Universities after exchange or study abroad has become an issue
- To earn a degree in English Teaching in Germany requires that a student works in a school in an English speaking country for at least three months. Plan in the works for a pilot scheme to recruit these students for work placements of 6 months in Scottish schools.

The CPG will raise the issue with Scottish Government regarding the teaching of the German language in schools and also discuss with Councils

The CPG will speak to the Scottish Government about University exchanges and how these can be better promoted and issues related to bursaries resolved.

Promoting German Language for Tourism and Business is important.

- National historic sites should have signs and information in German

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- National historic sites should have tours in German – also provide opportunity for those learning German to practise their German
- Promote hospitality industry to begin to better utilise German language and materials for Tourists

CPG to write to Historic Scotland and National Trust to enquire as to the current status and/or policy foreign language tours, materials and signage.

Economic Promoting Scottish Businesses to look at Germany as a new market

- Not enough information about expanding business in Germany through SDI or local Chamber of Commerce
 - SDI good at first enquiry, but not good at follow up and in business terms any wait is too long
- Local agencies need better guidance to help support businesses expand into international markets like Germany
- Edinburgh Business Bureau and other like could be used to promote Germany as a market for Scottish goods

Germany plan

- Last German action plan drafted by Scottish Government in 2007
- Current Administration talks to national government while regional governments might be better placed to help enable business links

CPG will contact Scottish Government to ask for an update on the German Plan