

Meeting Minutes
Cross Party Group on Germany
Wednesday the 22nd January 2020, 5.30pm – 7pm
TG.20/21
Next Meeting – Wednesday 18th March 2020, 5.30 – 7pm. TG.20/21

In attendance – Christoph Crepaz (Austrian Consulate), Barbara Quick (German Consul General), Barbara Strickland (German Citizen), James Trolland (Ridrum Group), Annette Götzkes (University of Edinburgh), Eleoma Bodammer (University of Edinburgh), Ewen Cameron (Scottish Development International/Scottish Enterprise), Gordon Lindhurst MSP, Colin Beattie MSP, Andrew Murphy (Parliament Staff), Louise Cameron (Secretary / Parliament Staff), Cameron Buchanan (Former MSP)

Apologies – John Clifford (Former Consul of Austria), Elaine Smith (MSP), Peter Muller-McDougall (Consulate General of Switzerland), Sigrid Rieuwerts (University of Mainz), Manuela Calchini (Visit Scotland)

1. Introduction – Christoph Crepaz, Honorary Consul of Austria & Secretary of the Consular Corps in Scotland

CC joined as the Honorary Consul of Austria for Scotland in June 2018 and was elected as the Secretary of the Consular Corps in October 2018. CC noted he was looking forward to seeing what work the CPG was undertaking and exploring what we can do together. CC hopes we can improve the connections between Scotland and Austria.

2. Informal Discussion hosted by Annette Götzkes; An Overview of German Teaching at Universities in Scotland

AG provided information on the German Studies department at Edinburgh University. AG teaches together with Eleoma Bodammer at the university. AG also leads the Outreach and Participation team, which works together with the Scottish Government and helps students from disadvantaged background. The University do a lot with the German Consulate, Goethe Institute, schools and within the wider community. AG noted that she is grateful for the strong community connection, as it is a boost for students to have the opportunity to work externally from the University and although it is nerve wracking for

students to do this, working in the local community is a big confidence boost for students.

In 2016 the University began working on a project with Mainz University, wherein 20 students went to work with refugees. This allowed students to teach children German for 3 weeks, also to work with adult refugees in the evenings. Although they did share much of a common language, they used the international language of games to make teaching more effective.

Outreach and Wider Participation Work –The school of languages run workshops for primary school children and S1 pupils, many of whom come from typically low achieving schools. AG highlighted that many disadvantaged students come from colleges rather than schools. The University also hosts higher immersion days for students studying at higher level. These occasions are run in conjunction with the Goethe Institute and German students from the University helped to run the day. The University is going to take part in Sutton Trust Summer School, where they will take students from deprived background and give them two subjects to study over the Summer. This is the first time school of languages are participating. The Summer School shows that the University is a friendly place, with a vibrant community and gets them familiar with the campus. Staff members from the University have also been visiting schools to stress importance of language learning and 4th year students go along to tell the pupils about their years abroad. These peer activities really boost language learning and raise the aspirations of pupils.

Languages Beyond University – This is a 20 credit course for 2nd year students, where they can go to schools and deliver a cultural project. Students write blogs about their experiences and also liaise with schools to run their own courses independently within the school. This is in collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council. Students will work with a mentor to deliver a cultural project, which is usually connected with their year abroad. It gives them the opportunity to study the destination they are hoping to go to as they prepare for the year ahead. They conclude by writing a 3000 word reflective essay in German on the experience, which allows them to practice reflective learning.

Germany in the Wider Community -The University has a German-Jewish network which is driven with by a combination of students and staff. They have had very effective events, such as when they invited the daughter of a holocaust survivor and the grandson of nazi to have a discussion. The University has a variety of other programmes such as their writer in residence, the German play (which is on the 4th and 5th of March), the SQIFF Festival (Scottish Queer International Festival), and the first year interview project (where Interview someone in German to receive their grade). For the Interview project the University have regular interview partners, such as the Goethe Institute, and this has resulted in

students receiving work experience and internships in the past. This year's Writer in Residence is Max Czollek, the author of *Desintegriert Euch*, who writes on integration and is coming to work with students during the first week of February which will help them with their translation.

Outreach and Widening Participation

In schools:

- This boosts attitudes towards language learning and encourages the uptake of languages in the senior phase of schools. There is work done in mostly in disadvantaged areas and helps to narrow the poverty related attainment gap.
- Feedback has shown that the outreach and widening participation work has changed impressions and that it encouraged the uptake of German language learning and raised the general opinion towards studying a foreign language. The course has had a huge impact on pupils, and the participation students also really enjoy the course.

In Universities:

- The outreach projects support and engage students, as well as promoting independent learning. It allows them to develop their learning in the local community. This also underpins the widening participation strategy.
- In relation to the widening participation strategy, the University has exceeded in their widening access target. The University aimed to have 10% of new full time Scottish degree students from SIMD20 areas by 2021, however they have already reached target and want to be more ambitious. They don't want to simply recruit students, but they want to ensure they thrive. Languages typically have quite low numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. To help students thrive the University are working to ensure that students feel a sense of belonging through extra curriculars, and this simultaneously improves employability.

Open Discussion

CB – How many Native Scots go on a year abroad? I believe in the past this figure was very low.

AG – The 3rd year students now must go abroad when studying language degree.

JT – Have students gone back into schools which they originally came from to encourage and lead others on the same path?

AG – Yes, I believe that some students have gone back.

JT – I have concerns about the use of the word ‘deprived’. I don’t feel that in those geographical areas they would use this language and may even find it demeaning. I think the term ‘social mobility’ is better

AG – The terminology is what they have chosen, as it encapsulates many different factors within the use of this term.

GL – The point is that we help those who aren’t typically getting into higher education, colleges, universities etc. Different expectations are put on young people who come from wealthier areas. We need to provide opportunities to those who don’t typically have them and different factors must be considered to do this. This doesn’t just mean looking at the factor of poverty, but rather a whole range of factors need to be considered to give young people the opportunities they haven’t been getting.

AG – The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation process from Scottish government clearly defines what would be considered as deprived – this accounts for things such as if the parents went to University, if they need to receive free school lunches, if they are young carers. In these situations, we can lower the grade threshold because they have had to fight against all odds to get to that position in the first place.

GL – I think it is extremely valuable to put students into real life situations for language learning. Most students don’t go abroad when they are teenagers to learn other languages, yet this typically happens in other countries. Usually, for students in the UK the first experience of being immersed in another culture is when they are at university. Is there the possibility of this changing any time soon to allow for British students to go abroad when they are younger?

AG – There seems to be more of a universal appeal of learning English. School exchanges are now almost impossible given the strict health and safety restrictions in the UK.

CB – I have lots of deprived areas in constituency. Lasswade High School grasped the opportunity to teach Mandarin and have created strong links with China. Why can’t the same be done for German?

AG – The Chinese send teachers over here for free. There is also a treaty in place between the French Government and the Scottish Government to exchange language teachers. Language learning is an important form of diplomacy. Children will compete in the global job market and the reality is that students with more languages are more likely to get jobs.

LC – What do you envisage language learning will look like post Brexit, especially given UK Government is dropping valuable exchange programmes like Erasmus?

AG – Currently that is very uncertain, but we hope other agreements will come into place.

Cameron Buchanan – Are we having issues with not having enough native speakers here?

AG - The issue is we don't have enough people who have a good enough understanding of the language to teach it. Languages are competing with STEM, but also many students are demotivated to learn German, as many haven't learned it prior to secondary, or students don't want to have to start from the beginning again if they have been learning it already. The topics are also often not engaging enough for young people.

EB – We had a degree programme called Primary Education and German, but it wasn't working and so was phased out. It needed more time to be revised rather than being simply phased out. It was replaced by a teaching qualification at Post Graduate level.

AG – Students who do a year abroad are 50% less likely to become unemployed. It teaches them a particular resilience.

CB – Who do we need to contact to work on these issues?

AG – Local Authorities, Headmasters, Directors of Education.

LC noted that the next meeting of the CPG on Germany would be taking place at 5.30pm on the 18th of March.