

Scottish Parliament
Cross Party Group on Poland Meeting
Tuesday, 24 January 2017, 1.00-2.30 pm, The Fleming Room TG.60-CR3

MINUTES

In attendance:

Co-Conveners

Claire Baker MSP, Scottish Labour

Maree Todd MSP, Scottish National Party

MSPs

Ivan McKee MSP, Scottish National Party

Speakers

Krystyna Szumelukowa, Convener, Brexit and Beyond Group: the Polish Perspective

Magda Czarnecka, Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services

Members

Dobrawa Jezior, Secretary

Tomasz Tadla, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland

Provost Pat Reid, Falkirk Council

Zofia Wierzbowicz-Fraser, Polish Education Committee

Elżbieta O'Neill, Polish Education Committee

Dr Beata Kohlbek, Polish Education Committee

Dr John Bates, Polish Education Committee, University of Glasgow

Douglas Scott, Scottish Borders

Grażyna Fremi, Zielony Balonik

Joanna Zawadzka, Polish Cultural Festival Association

Dorota Peszkowska, Emito.net

Jacek Rozalski, Emito.net

Katarzyna Kokowska, Interactive Writing Salon in Scotland

Lesley A. Duncan, Scotpipe

Monika Ciska, Gazeta Polonijna

Izabella Brodzińska, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Barbara Nowosielska-Conboy, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Sylwia Kiro Zabinska-MacIntyre, Process Walk, Feniks

Keith Mullins-MacIntyre, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Maggie Sherrit, Angus Council

Barbara Wesółowska, Feniks

Magdalena Kurpiewska

Arkadiusz Kilanowski

Anna Kolman

Charlotte Kedsle, City of Edinburgh Council

Paweł Kopec, Polish Cultural Festival Association

Joanna Peters

George Rubienki, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Karin Friedrich, University of Aberdeen
Maciej Dokurno, Fife Migrants Forum
Tom Motyka
Maciej Wiczyński, Scottish National Party
Sacha Ponniah, Police Scotland
PC Grant Robertson, Police Scotland
Antony Kozlowski, Polish Social and Educational Society in Glasgow
Olivia Willis, Polish Professionals Forum

1. Welcome from the Co-Convenor, Claire Baker MSP

Claire Baker MSP welcomed Members to the first meeting of the re-established Cross Party Group on Poland. The group was informed that she would need to leave earlier due to the meeting of the Parliament at 2.30 pm.

2. Apologies

Maree Todd MSP, Scottish National Party - to join later during the meeting
Anna Ruszel, Polish Professional Forum
David Worthington, University of Highlands and Islands
Pat Glacken, Polish Education Committee
Michael Borland, Scottish Polish Cultural Association
Raymond Raszkowski Ros
Tomek Borkowy, Universal Arts
Katarzyna Jackowska, Polish Cultural festival Association
Andrew Roach, Polish Education Committee
Katy Carr
Ewelina Lukaszek
Dr Izabela Czekaj, Polish Social and Educational Society in Glasgow

3. Presentation by Krystyna Szumelukowa, Convenor of the Brexit and Beyond Group

(A complete briefing note to be circulated with the Minutes)

The group “Brexit and Beyond; the Polish Perspective” came together in the wake of the result of the EU referendum. The supreme court’s ruling on Brexit announced on 24 January 2017 was mentioned, which states that the government cannot trigger article 50 without an authorising act of parliament. The court also ruled, however, that UK ministers are not obliged to consult the devolved assemblies.

The group Brexit and Beyond is informal and it aims to:

- offer support to the Polish community in Scotland after the EU Referendum as may be needed. Poles resident in Scotland constitute the largest migrant group making its contribution to the vitality of Scotland’s economy.
- promote strong links between Scotland and Poland in Europe. Poland is the manufacturing and financial services hub of Central and Eastern Europe and offers Scotland a “gateway” to business with that part of Europe.

- recommend that cohesion in Europe can be protected through the reassertion of cultural links between the two countries which have developed historically between individuals, voluntary groups, local authorities, universities and schools and our major festivals.

The group members come from various fields of interest. They met together on 31st August 2016 and 14th December 2016 and with Michael Russell, Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, on 21st December 2016. The group worked to build a "portfolio" of concerns and future actions.

Regarding official voices on the consequences of the EU referendum, The Scottish Government published its own statement entitled "Scotland's Place in Europe" where it makes the case for a differentiated settlement for Scotland. On January 17th 2017 the PM gave her Brexit speech at Lancaster House in London, which was the subject of debate in the Scottish Parliament on the same day. The plan was presented to the UK Joint Ministerial Committee on European Negotiations on January 19th 2017.

The Cultural, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee issues a weekly briefing on Brexit from its Information Centre and the committee itself has taken evidence from 150 organisations and individuals across a wide spectrum of concerns. It has issued its own report "What Scotland Thinks". Since the referendum in June last year we have witnessed a significant endeavour on the part of many to come to terms with the result and its consequences.

It was emphasised that **the Cross Party Group on Poland should play its own part in addressing the relevant issues with regard to Brexit**. There is no official role of the Scottish Parliament, but it could still deliver a substantial debate and continue to lobby.

Unfortunately, there is still a lack of assurance for EU citizens six months after the referendum. The Brexit and Beyond Group's position is that the lawful rights of EU citizens should not be diminished before the date of departure from the EU and should not be categorized as "negotiating capital". The right to remain should be offered as British Citizens, dual nationals or permanent residents. This should be unilaterally declared by the UK government not only as a moral duty but also to encourage reciprocal goodwill towards UK citizens in the EU. Current EU citizens should be eligible for residential status for themselves and child dependants. Moreover, the devolution of powers to Scotland are gradually being extended from within the EU and Westminster constitutional frameworks. The Scottish Parliament now has additional powers over taxation, which defines a new relationship between the government and its citizens and the question arises as to whether this can be further extended to foresee additional powers to oversee migration into Scotland.

Importantly, Scottish Higher Education sector and students will be affected as a result of Brexit. Scotland's leadership in Higher Education is being challenged because the loss of student numbers will sit alongside uncertainty for staff and their families who need security of tenure. The universities are not just significant drivers of Scotland's economy but also lead the way in cultural links. In rising to the challenge faced by the universities support should be given to universities to extend direct collaborations with universities and research centres in Europe in the future.

It was pointed out that there has been certain disregard experienced by some EU citizens as a consequence of the referendum. This should be addressed through mediation, advisory services and other forms of support which will be perhaps needed in the future.

It is also crucial to continue developing links between Poland and Scotland, for example in the area of culture. In particular, 2018 is the 100th anniversary of the Independence of Poland and this would provide a good opportunity for the Scottish and Polish Governments to headline our links. Michael Russell was very positive on this point at the meeting on 21st December 2016.

The Brexit and Beyond group offers its support to other organisations as well as the Government. The above points are brought to the attention of the Cross Party Group on Poland to help shape the way in which the CPG and the Brexit and Beyond Group can support each other and work together. Michael Russell has recommended approaching all UK MPs in Scotland and lobbying the All Party Group on Poland in Westminster. He has also invited briefing for a forthcoming meeting on the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee which has its next meeting on 30th January 2017 and which is chaired by Danuta Hübner.

Claire Baker MSP thanked Krystyna Szumelukowa for her presentation and said it was very positive to see Polish people coming together and offer their contribution to the debate.

4. Presentation by Magda Czarnecka, Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services

Magda Czarnecka presented the results of the **EU Nationals' Reactions and Long-term Consequences of the EU Referendum Results Study Report**.

Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services, a charitable organisation providing mental health support to Central Eastern European Community in Scotland, decided to examine the moods of EU nationals in the UK after the referendum. The purpose of the study was to see how the result of the EU referendum influenced the well-being and plans of the Polish/EU nationals. In particular Feniks was interested in their emotional reactions, feeling of safety (on macro and micro level), feelings about the future and sense of control (or lack thereof).

The number of the participants was 657. The conducted online survey was anonymous, circulated via social media (Twitter, Facebook) with support from various news outlets: New Europeans, The National (advertised in print on 27th Aug 2016), Third Force News and Emito.net (Polish community website). The survey was conducted between 1st August and 13th September 2016, when the general feeling about the outcome of the referendum presented by the media was rather bleak.

The profile of the respondents

657 people in total took part in the study, of which 56% were women and 44% men. The youngest respondent was 17 and the oldest 75 years old, with the average age of respondents at 36 indicating young workers, possibly settled with young families, who might have not had the experience of working anywhere else but in the UK. The majority of the respondents were Polish (61.5%) (due to survey being mostly circulated amongst the Polish community), followed by British (7.8%), Dutch (6.9%), German (4.9%), Italian (4.1%), Spanish (3.5%) and others (11.3%).

The respondents were based in different parts of the UK: 55.6% in Scotland, 42.3%

Summary of the results

When asked about their initial feelings after the results were announced 27.5% of respondents were shocked, 19.3% sad, 15.4% angry, 13.5% anxious, 12.5% confused. About 6% claimed that they were happy. Other respondents were expressing feelings such as: excitement, some said that they were indifferent about the result or that they don't know how they felt about it. More than 70% were worried (to a greater or lesser extent) about what the consequences of Brexit would be.

The survey also asked how confident the respondents were that they would be able to stay in the UK after Brexit, nearly 65% were certain or very confident about their right to stay. Over 30% did not feel too confident, or predicted that they would have to leave. However, asked how confident they felt that the British government would work in the interest of EU citizens who chose to stay in UK, almost 80% were convinced the government would not protect their rights (42.5% not very confident; 36.5% not confident at all). Others were either unsure (5.3%), quite (11.4%) or very confident (4.3%) that the government would work in their best interest.

When asked to assess whether they felt less welcome in the UK after the referendum: 34.2% agreed and 23.3% strongly agreed, 12.9% did not agree at all and 8.5% strongly disagreed. 21% did not offer an opinion. The participants were asked how safe they felt in the UK. More than half felt very safe (51.6%), over a quarter of respondents felt quite safe (35.6%), and others did not feel too safe or did not feel safe at all (around 13%).

When authors compared the results of the survey with respect to where the respondents live, they observed some interesting trends. Asked to rate how much at home they felt by average people felt more settled in Scotland (7.02 on the scale from 1 to 10) than in England (6.59 on the scale from 1 to 10). More than a half of those living in Scotland (57%) rated it between 8 and 10 as opposed to England (34%). However, 32.1% of the participants who live in England strongly agreed they felt less welcome after the referendum, but only 16% of those, who live in Scotland. 90.6% participants from Scotland felt safe or very safe in the area they live in, compared with 82.9% in England. 17.1% of those living in England indicated they didn't feel very safe or not at all safe, but only 9.4% of those living in Scotland.

Concluding from the survey results it's fair to say that the results of the Brexit referendum have greatly impacted the well-being of the EU nationals living in the UK. Their concerns are linked to their conviction that the government will not work in their best interest; lack of any decision-making power and feeling that their future situation is uncertain. It seems that **the crucial consequence of the results of the referendum for the EU nationals living in the UK is feeling less welcome than before**, which might be a direct result of the increase in hate crime incidents.

The full Report is available online: http://www.feniks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Feniks_Report_EU_nationals_reaction_to_Brexit.pdf

Joanna Zawadzka, Polish Cultural Festival Association

In light of the report presented by Feniks, it is especially important now to emphasise and celebrate the contribution of migrants to the UK. PCFA will take part in a national day of action “1 Day Without Us” on 20th February 2017 and would like to ask the CPG members for their support.

1 Day Without Us is a National Day of Action on 20th Feb 2017 to celebrate the contribution of migrants to the UK, to coincide with UN World Day of Social Justice. For 24 hours, migrants from inside and outside the European Union, and everyone who supports them, are invited to celebrate the contribution that migrants make. Some may choose to do this symbolically, by wearing badges and lanyards, posting selfies or pictures that show your support, or putting posters in their windows. Some may wish to have a communal meal or a party with the migrants they have known as friends, colleagues, workmates and neighbours. Workers may take a five-minute silence or a mini-rally at lunchtime or tea-time. There are many ways that you can take part in this day. Do what you feel able to do and what you feel is most appropriate to your situation. Whatever your nationality and place of origin; wherever you live and work, join us and make February 20 a day of protest, solidarity and celebration.

Details to be circulated by the Secretary.

Further discussion

Claire Baker MSP thanked the speakers for their presentations and asked for questions and contributions from the Members.

Dr Karin Friedrich from the University of Aberdeen spoke about a survey conducted before the referendum “Attitudes and responses of Polish citizens living in the UK to the EU referendum”. Dr Friedrich said that a comparison of attitudes of Polish citizens in the UK before and after the EU referendum shows that, before that date, more Poles in England felt comfortable living there than now, and that this trend was the opposite in Scotland, where more Poles now say they feel comfortable living in Scotland than they did before the EU referendum.

Adding to the discussion on Brexit, **Maciej Wiczyński** pointed out that Scotland will not have a say in the Brexit negotiation process. By triggering the Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the British Government will in fact strip people (EU citizens) of their rights and no government should be allowed to do that.

Maciej Dokurno underlined that today’s discussion is a good starting point for further initiatives to be taken forward. He asked Magda Czarnecka whether she was familiar with any kind of research on Brexit and its implications for children of EU citizens born in Scotland. Maciej Dokurno also asked if the CPG could possibly send a message urging the Polish Government to secure rights of the Polish citizens and asking to support Scotland’s ambitions for a special settlement.

Magda Czarnecka: Dr Daniela Sime of the University of Strathclyde is currently an investigator an ESRC-funded project which looks at issues of identity, citizenship and belonging among settled Eastern European young people in the UK (see www.migrantyouth.org).

With regards to seeking support of the Polish Government, **Krystyna Szumelukowa** noted that according to recent amendments, EU countries cannot talk to so-called sub-states (i.e. Scotland). It was suggested that the CPG on Poland could instead write a briefing letter /statement for Michael Russell and Fiona Hyslop.

Olivia Willis, Polish Professionals Forum: professionals on contracts in Finance, Education etc. feel uneasy about their future after Brexit referendum. Central European employees feel less secure.

Action point: Ivan McKee MSP to discuss possibility of sending a letter to the Polish Government by the CPG on Poland with other MSPs. Maciej Dokurno to provide a draft of the letter if needed.

5. Work programme discussion chaired by Ivan McKee MSP

After a short discussion, the Group decided to establish 5 thematic groups within the CPG:

- 1) Education (Zofia Wierzbowicz-Fraser)
- 2) Support (Magda Czarnecka)
- 3) Culture (Joanna Zawadzka)
- 4) Business (Antony Kozlowski)
- 5) Brexit (Krystyna Szumelukowa).

- Update from the Education group, Zofia Wierzbowicz-Fraser

Continuing our actions from last year, we are beginning to see small steps moving forward. We have a number of successful outcomes to share with you:

- PEC have worked at two major educational and language exhibitions.
- With the help of Tom Hamilton and his successor Ellen Doherty (Director of General Teaching Council for Scotland) we have negotiated the setting up of a new registration category for Polish teachers. This permits the Polish teachers to provisionally register with GTCS and teach in Scottish schools.
- A positive meeting was held with Maureen McKenna –Director of Education @ the Directorate in Glasgow. As a result of this we will be working with the Language Development unit in Glasgow and have met with Gillian Campbell-Thow who supported us enthusiastically and inspired Elwira to prepare even more material for access by schools.
- We are now also working with LANGS and the SCES (Scottish Catholic Schools Director) in order to gain as much support as possible for our campaign.
- We are to meet Mr John Swinney (Deputy First Minister for Education and Skills) in early February, and are hoping for a favourable reception to our ideas.
- We have decided to run an electronic petition through the media via Emito.net, and collect as many signatures as possible, supporting the teaching of Polish in Scottish Schools.

- Culture sub group

Grażyna Femi informed the Group that Zielony Balonik book club will soon have a new website. It is also preparing a new project aiming to influence integration of Polish and Scottish children and improve readership.

Joanna Zawadzka informed the Group about their plans for a Polish Scottish Tartan Festival in May 2017 and a children theatre festival to take place in autumn. More details to follow.

- Support sub group

Feniks is currently working together with NHS and Police Scotland on establishing and tackling the high level of suicide rates among the Polish community in Scotland.

6. AOB

Antony Kozlowski: Sikorski Memorial House in Glasgow will participate in the commemorations of the Clydebank Blitz and the part played by ORP Piorun and her crew. This will be on Saturday 11th March. The Director of the Polish Naval Museum in Gdynia will be joining commemoration at Old Dalnottar Cemetery and at the Piorun Memorial in Solidarity Place.

Joanna Zawadzka informed the Group about the success of the Vote. You are at Home campaign, targeted at Polish community in Scotland and aiming to educate and encourage participation in the democratic process. There are at least 48 757 Polish electors registered to vote in Scotland. That is data from 28 council areas - 4 have not responded yet. 48 757 is an **increase of 14 487** compared with last year, before the campaign was launched - an unprecedented surge. The biggest number of Polish voters in an individual council is registered in Edinburgh - 10 593. The biggest increase, of over 20% in the number of voters was noted in East Ayrshire, followed closely by North Ayrshire and Fife.

7. Date of the next meeting: 23 March 2017 (TBC)

The meeting will address regional assembly links and international cooperation between Fife Council and Kujawsko – Pomorskie Assembly.