

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

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# CROSS PARTY GROUP ON POLAND

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*Thursday, 13 September 2018, 1.00 – 2.30 pm*

*Committee Room 3 (Sir Alexander Fleming Room)*

I. In attendance:

1. Conveners: MSP Claire Baker
2. Members: MSP David Torrance, MSP Joan McAlpine
3. Other attendees: Zosia Fraser, Chris Sagan, Violeta Ilendo, Łukasz Michnik, Dobrawa Jezior, Sylwia Spooner, Sacha Ponniah, Keith Mullins-M<sup>ac</sup>Intyre, Sylwia Kiro Żabińska-MacIntyre, Marta Bruś, Lucyna Mazur-Markatzi, Krystyna Szumelukowa, Magda Czarnecka, Dorota Peszkowska, Joanna Peters, Robert L. Hodgart

II. Apologies:

Agata Wozny, Prof. Karin Friedrich, Aileen Orr, Katarzyna Jajszczok, Martin Stepek, Andrew Roach, John Bates, Joanna Zawadzka, Izabela Czekaj, Beata Kohlbek, Antony AC Kozlowski, David Worthington, George Rubiencki

III. AGM matters

IV. Ordinary business of the meeting:

1. Welcome.
2. Introductions.
3. Minutes of December meeting. It was recognised that the December meeting was not quorate, so minutes would not be published by Parliament.
4. Matter Arising – agreed to send a letter to Minister for Mental Health highlighting the research into the Polish community.

Suggestion was made to use name cards. Paper would be provided for member to write their own names.

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5. Dates for the next meetings decided to be in November, February/March and June.
6. Key themes for the year were discussed. It was suggested to invite Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations Michael Russell and the Polish Consul General to future meetings.
7. Suggestion was made to set a theme for each meeting.
8. Proposal to unite different aspects of the group and work together in sharing experiences and information. The idea to set up a Facebook group as a forum to share information.
  - a. There should be conditions for joining the group. Only the members of CPG should be allowed to join.
  - b. The group should be closed but visible publicly.
  - c. There should be a statement how to use the group to be allowed to become a member.
  - d. There should be questions set in order for members to join.
  - e. An administrator and moderators should be chosen.
9. Updates from the sub-committees:
  - a. Brexit and Beyond
    - Update on the group and outline of the political situation.
    - Planned settlement scheme for EU citizens was published by the Home Office. This is the process by which EU citizens living in the UK can maintain their right to live in the UK after Brexit. The current proposed Withdrawal Agreement maintains freedom of movement rights until 31 December 2020. The intention is that settled status will allow EU citizens (or close family of EU citizens) who are living or have started living in the UK by 31 December 2020 to continue to live and work in the UK for as long as they like. The draft rules also include eligibility for some close family members living abroad.
    - Eligible people with less than 5 years' continuous residence in the UK will be granted 'pre-settled status' which will provide them the right to stay in the UK for a further 5 years. Once 5 years' of continuous residence is completed full settled status can be applied for.
    - Application process: an online form and the provision of various documents to prove identity and residence. A smartphone app has been developed to assist with the application and validation. Application will cost £65 and £32.50 for children under 16, or be free for people already

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granted indefinite leave to remain, a valid permanent residence document or pre-settled status.

- The UK Government plans for the settlement scheme to open in a phased way and be fully open by 30 March 2019, with a deadline for applications of 30 June 2021. This timetable provides for a 6 month 'grace period' between the end of the proposed transition period and the deadline for applications. Email updates are available from the Home Office for people wishing to be kept aware of developments:  
<https://eucitizensrights.campaign.gov.uk>.
- On July 25 there was the launch of a tool kit for employers to navigate the settlement scheme.
- The British Government also confirmed that students from the EU starting courses in 2019/2020 would continue to be eligible for home fee status.
- UK-Poland Belvedere Forum held in February 2018. Next forum planned to be held in the spring of 2019.

### b. Culture

- Progress on the renovation of the Polish Ex-Combatants House at 11 Drummond Place in Edinburgh.  
External repairs will be undertaken this autumn and internal works will commence in 2019. A project to rescue the books, documents and other objects of heritage value is being set up with advice from the University of Edinburgh Library Service. Zielony Balonik (The Scottish Polish Book Club) will manage the project.
- Zielony Balonik is celebrating the year of Zbigniew Herbert this year with a programme of poetry presentations in Edinburgh Schools by Ken Cockburn and a special event for educationalists at the Scottish Poetry Library.
- Word Polishers initiative  
Website: <https://www.facebook.com/wordpolishers/>  
There will be events with authors. On 27 October there will be a meeting with Marianna Sztyma, an author of illustrations for children's books.
- EU Citizens Project  
Website: <https://www.facebook.com/EURightsProject/>  
Bringing together migrant groups, immigration lawyers, charitable organisations and local activists to provide verified information about Brexit and settled status process.  
The group is reaching to over 400 EU nationals directly through their

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events and to many more online. The events were covered by the press: Herald Scotland, BBC Radio Scotland and a range of local media. 15,000 factsheets on Brexit were produced in a number of languages and distributed among migrant communities. The online version can be found under this link: <https://publicpolicyevents.com/eu-citizens-rights-project/>

- Series of open events to celebrate the 100 years of independence will be held.
- Research at the University of Edinburgh: 'Polski na emigracji'.
- The ceremony of unveiling of the Maczek Memorial will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. There will be an Eventbrite page to register.
- Update from Scottish-Polish Cultural Association

### c. Education

- Update about the Education Group and current issues. Polish language remains the most commonly spoken in primary and secondary schools after English. 1+2 Policy is beginning to be used in many local authority areas.
- Material available for teachers in L3 and beyond: 'The Star of Copernicus', 'Wojtek the Bear' and package created by the British Council on Polish Language and Culture.
- Potential problems of shortage of Polish-speaking teachers after Brexit.
- To convince headteachers and students of the value of Polish as a Modern Foreign Language it will be necessary to have material which is accredited and results in exam certificates from SQU. Ministerial intervention is necessary for that purpose.
- 20 or so Polish Saturday Schools in Scotland present candidates for AQA-English GCSE and A level exams. The numbers of candidates increase every year.

### d. Mental health

- Feniks event: 'Befriend Depression/ Oswoić depresję' will be held from 15 November to 2 December. It will be a fifth edition of this mental health awareness event and as always therapists and psychologists across

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Scotland are invited to join the action. Programmes and the report on suicides will be sent in due course.

- Campaign raising awareness about domestic abuse.
- The police have published 'A Guide to Scots Law' for persons coming to live in Scotland. Available in many languages online.

### e. Business

- Polish Professionals Forum update: the group has been involved in organising events and running projects aimed at young Polish professionals either moving to Scotland or looking forward to changing their career path.
- PFF has launched an on-going CV Clinic to provide assistance in streamlining CVs, tips for self-presentation and the interviewing process.
- There are Coaching and Executive Coaching sessions organised for professionals. They can attend a series of consultations regarding their area of choice.
- PFF is taking part in an international project run by the Premier International Business Club. This includes promotion of the book 'Business Inspirations' written by Polish businesswomen describing how they managed to achieve their success.