

MEETING MINUTES

Cross Party Group on Germany

Tuesday, 28th January 2014

Committee Room 4

Next Meeting

Tuesday, 25th March

5:30pm

Committee Room 4

Attendees

Colin Beattie MSP
Cameron Buchanan MSP
John Clifford, Austrian Consulate
Annette Götzkes, Edinburgh University
Verena Gräfin von Roedern, Consul General of Germany
Barbara Kaulbach, the Goethe Institut
Peter Müller McDougall, Swiss Consulate General
Carsten Raun, London Oktoberfest
Jeanette Rissmann, Edinburgh University
Heinrich Schnettger, German Consulate
Anncathrin Sürth, German Consulate
James Trolland, Scottish Democratic Alliance

Apologies Stefan Büttner, Manuela Calchini, Nicola De Paoli, Ken Macintosh MSP, Maureen Watt MSP, Petra Wend

Colin Beattie opened the meeting.

Topics Discussed:

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes & Matters Arising

Cameron Buchanan proposed the minutes and they were seconded by Verena Gräfin von Roedern.

The minutes were approved.

Annette Götzkes confirmed that she had spoken to both Alan MacNiven and Huw Lewis at Edinburgh University about speaking to the CPG, and both were happy to do so subject to their availability.

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The group discussed the Parliamentary answers to questions Ken Macintosh had raised. Colin Beattie noted that there has been a reduction in both the teaching of German in schools and the number of German language assistants over the past ten years. Cameron Buchanan mentioned that this information did not include private schools.

ACTION POINT – Colin Beattie to write to Alasdair Allan to ask what plans the Scottish Government has to reverse this trend

Colin Beattie noted that the group had discussed inviting a local headteacher to speak to the group. John Clifford mentioned that the Group would need to target one with a particular interest in teaching German. Annette Götzkes suggested approaching Anne Robertson, the language advisor at Edinburgh Council. Colin Beattie said the Group should consider asking someone with authority and able to make decisions, such as the Director of Education or the Convener of the Council Education Committee. Heinrich Schnettger noted that the figures from the German Consulate's 'German Educational Trainees (GET) Across Borders' programme were not included as part of the Parliamentary answers and suggested asking Prof. Rieuwerts, the co-founder of the GET programme, to discuss this programme.

Colin Beattie asked the Group who they wanted to prioritise to speak to the Group at the March meeting. John Clifford stated that the Group should perhaps step back from the coal face and instead speak to someone involved with the rationale for language teaching, such as Antonella Suraci at Edinburgh University.

Colin Beattie asked what sort of information Alan McNiven and Huw Lewis would be able to provide. Annette Götzkes stated they would be able to discuss things like student numbers and uptake of languages. John Clifford said he was concerned the Group would be analysing the situation as it stands rather than what can be done to improve it.

Colin Beattie suggested to the Group that it could invite either Alan MacNiven or Huw Lewis and also the Director of Education to the March meeting, and that they be asked to speak for 10-15 minutes.

ACTION POINT – Colin Beattie to invite Edinburgh's Director of Education to the March meeting

ACTION POINT – Annette Götzkes to invite Alan MacNiven or Huw Lewis to the March meeting

Cameron Buchanan asked if the Group knew what the uptake of German languages was in private schools.

ACTION POINT – Graeme Henderson to write to the private schools in Edinburgh to ask what the uptake of German languages is

John Clifford noted that he had asked the Austrian trade commissioner to speak to the Group regarding renewables, and the response had been positive. Verena Gräfin von Roedern said that the German law regarding renewables was in the process of being changed and she could discuss this topic at a later stage, possibly at the next meeting.

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Colin Beattie mentioned that Colin Keir had suggested Nova Innovation as a company that could be invited to speak to the Group, and that Ingenza had also been touted. Peter Müller McDougall noted that Ingenza were aiming to increase the value of their manufacturing side and it therefore would probably be worth waiting six months or so to see what has arisen from this.

Colin Beattie suggested to the Group that Fiona Hyslop be invited to speak to the Group at the meeting in May. Verena Gräfin von Roedern suggested that, if Fiona was unavailable, Humza Yousaf could be invited.

ACTION POINT – Colin Beattie to invite Fiona Hyslop to the meeting on 27th May

The Group discussed the Goethe Institut's 'German Language Adventure' day for schools. Barbara Kaulbach noted that the programme had been highly successful and they were awaiting further funding from the German Government.

Presentation from Carsten Raun - Oktoberfest

Carsten Raun gave a presentation to the Group on Oktoberfest. The idea is to bring a taste of the Munich Oktoberfest to other cities. The project was originally started in 2009 in Copenhagen, and 2014 will see it expanded to 13 European cities. Events were held in Sweden and London in 2011. Carsten Raun noted that they had held an event in Amsterdam in 2013 but there was not enough interest to make it worthwhile, and there were similar situations in Norway and Finland. Edinburgh had been chosen as a city as it was relatively 'open' and international.

Colin Beattie asked if the beer and food was imported from Bavaria. Carsten Raun confirmed that this was the case, and mentioned 25,000 litres of beer was imported for the Edinburgh event. Verena Gräfin von Roedern asked if it was held at the same time as the German Oktoberfest. Carsten Raun stated that yes, it was held over the first two weekends in October. Annette Götzkes asked if her first year students would be able to get involved and Carsten Raun this could certainly be the case.

Cameron Buchanan asked where the Oktoberfest went to after Edinburgh, and Carsten Raun replied Glasgow where around 13,000 people visited the event. In Edinburgh around 10,000 people visited over five days, and Carsten Raun noted that as a result of this success they had applied to Edinburgh Council to hold the event over two weekends in 2014.

James Trolland asked if it would be possible for Scottish, German-speaking catering students to work at the event. Carsten Raun said this would be a good idea providing the students have the appropriate certificate. Carsten Raun said they were hoping to hold the Glasgow event in George Square this year, as opposed to Glasgow Green in 2013.

Colin Beattie thanked Carsten Raun for presenting to the Group.

Economic Update

Verena Gräfin von Roedern felt that the economic situation in Germany was going well at the moment, but that to some extent it depended on export situation to other

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countries. Colin Beattie asked what the unemployment rate was. Verena Gräfin von Roedern thought it was roughly around 7-8%. John Clifford noted that it was important to look at the overall numbers and not just the percentage changes. Verena Gräfin von Roedern said that the car industry had been doing well in Germany in recent times.

Political Update

Verena Gräfin von Roedern gave an update on the situation in Germany. The coalition agreement was signed on 17th December. Verena Gräfin von Roedern felt there had been a fairly even split of Ministerial roles, and that it was early days for the coalition. Verena Gräfin von Roedern provided the Group with a newspaper article, written by the German Foreign Minister, about 1914 and the need for diplomacy.

John Clifford mentioned that, in Austria, there was a large element of renewable energy which had enabled the country to raise its 2020 renewable energy targets from 30% to 33%.

Peter Müller McDougall noted that the Swiss Government had recently agreed upon its 2050 energy strategy, whereby the focus would no longer be on nuclear power. At the moment roughly 55% of electricity is produced by hydro power, and it is anticipated that the remaining 45% will come from both savings and renewable power (including solar). Peter Müller McDougall said that the economic growth forecast in Switzerland was between 2-3%, while unemployment was 3-4% but expected to increase. Peter Müller McDougall noted that there was a referendum on immigration due shortly which could see the end to open movements at Swiss borders.

Culture Update

Barbara Kaulbach said that, on 17th February in the Callendar House in Falkirk, there would be an event on the photography of Gerda Taro, including photos she took during the Spanish Civil War. Barbara Kaulbach mentioned that the Goethe Institut would be partaking in Edinburgh's Film and Book Festivals, as well as holding numerous events in Glasgow throughout the year. Annette Götzkes noted that the Edinburgh Film Festival would be using Germany as its theme this year.

Annette Götzkes mentioned that the Goethe Institut, St Andrews University and others had formed a 'Friends of Germany' Facebook page. Colin Beattie asked if Annette Götzkes would circulate this page around the Group.

ACTION POINT – Annette Götzkes to circulate the 'Friends of Germany' Facebook page around the CPG

Barbara Kaulbach said that Jan Wagner, a German poet, would be appearing in Glasgow on 5th March and at the StAnza Poetry Festival in St Andrews on 7th March. Barbara Kaulbach further noted that the Goethe Institut's student numbers had gone up from 220 last semester to 300 this semester.

Other business

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Colin Beattie noted the next meetings as per the agenda.

Colin Beattie closed the meeting at 19.01.