European and External Relations Committee

Annual Report 2014-2015
European and External Relations Committee

The remit of the European and External Relations Committee is to consider and report on:

- a. proposals for European Union legislation;
- b. the implementation of European Communities and European Union legislation;
- c. any European Communities or European Union issue;
- d. the development and implementation of the Scottish Administration’s links with countries and territories outside Scotland, the European Union (and its institutions) and other international organisations; and
- e. co-ordination of the international activities of the Scottish Administration.

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## Committee Membership

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<th>Convener</th>
<th>Deputy Convener</th>
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<td>Christina McKelvie</td>
<td>Hanzala Malik</td>
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<td>Scottish National Party</td>
<td>Scottish Labour</td>
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<th>Roderick Campbell</th>
<th>Willie Coffey</th>
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<th>Adam Ingram</th>
<th>Jamie McGrigor</th>
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<td>Scottish National Party</td>
<td>Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party</td>
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**Note:** The membership of the Committee changed during the period covered by this report, as follows:

Adam Ingram joined the Committee on 27 November 2014, replacing Clare Adamson (SNP member for Central Scotland)

Anne McTaggart joined the Committee on 8 January 2015, replacing Alex Rowley (Scottish Labour member for Cowdenbeath)
Introduction

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

1. This report covers the work of the European and External Relations Committee during the parliamentary year from 11 May 2014 to 10 May 2015.

Inquiries and reports

Scottish Government’s proposals on an independent Scotland’s membership of the European Union

2. The Committee concluded its inquiry into the Scottish Government’s proposals on an independent Scotland’s membership of the European Union, publishing its report on 23 May 2014. A committee debate was held in the Chamber on 4 June 2014.

3. The Committee also held three roundtable evidence sessions on the Scottish Government’s White Paper on independence. These focused on the Scottish Government’s proposals for international development; citizenship and immigration; and membership of international organisations in an independent Scotland.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

4. The Committee conducted an inquiry into the implications of TTIP – the trade agreement currently being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. As part of this inquiry the Committee held roundtable evidence sessions with key stakeholders, and then took evidence from the European Commission’s Deputy Chief Negotiator, the UK Government Minister for Trade and Investment and the Scottish Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy.

5. The Committee published a report on 17 March 2015. The report included a number of conclusions and recommendations for the European Commission, the UK Government and the Scottish Government in relation to TTIP. The Committee also agreed to continue its work on TTIP for the remainder of the parliamentary session, particularly in relation to proposals for Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanisms and the impact of the eventual agreement on public services. A debate on the Committee’s report was held in the Chamber of the Scottish Parliament on 29 April 2015.

Connecting Scotland: how Scotland can engage most effectively in a globalising world

6. The Committee launched a major inquiry into how Scotland can engage most effectively in a globalising world in late 2014. The inquiry has four strands: how
the Scottish Government and its agencies engage internationally; how Scottish organisations engage internationally; Scotland’s physical, virtual and social connectivity with the world; and the value of membership of international organisations to Scotland and Scotland’s relationship with them.

7. The Committee launched a call for evidence and took oral evidence on the first strand of the inquiry on how the Scottish Government and its agencies engage internationally. It also launched the second strand on how organisations in Scotland engage internationally.

The European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds

8. The Committee kept a watching brief on the ESI funds as the Partnership Agreement between the UK and the European Commission, which sets out the national authorities’ plans on how to use funding from the ESI funds between 2014-2020 was finally agreed. The operation programmes have also now been finalised allowing projects to commence. The Committee considered two updates from the Scottish Government on ESI funds in June and December 2014. The Committee intends to undertake fact-finding visits at an appropriate time on the implementation of EU funded programmes across Scotland.

The Scottish Government’s draft budget

9. As part of the annual budget process, the Committee scrutinised the Scottish Government’s proposals for the Europe and External Affairs (EEA) portfolio in the Draft Budget 2015-16.

10. In its report on the Draft Budget 2015-16, the Committee welcomed the fact that there had not been an underspend in the Scottish Government’s EEA budget for 2013-14, and called on the Scottish Government to ensure that this continued in future years without significant transfers being made out of the EEA budget. The Committee also concluded that it would welcome more evidence in future years on value for money, outcomes, and priorities for the EEA budget line.

Convener and Committee members with HE Andris Teikmanis, Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia in the UK
EU Presidency evidence sessions

11. The Committee held an evidence session on 9 October 2014 with the Italian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, HE Pasquale Terracciano, on Italy’s priorities for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union and their relevance to Scotland. On 12 March 2015, the Committee took evidence from HE Andris Teikmanis, Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia in the UK, on Latvia’s priorities for its six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Scrutiny of the Scottish Government on EU issues

12. A key aspect of the Committee’s role is to scrutinise the Scottish Government’s engagement on EU issues. The Committee therefore sought to complement the EU Presidency evidence sessions by taking evidence from the Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs on the Scottish Government’s priorities for each six-month presidency period.

13. The Committee receives a number of reports every six months from the Scottish Government on the Horizon 2020 programme for research and innovation, an area of major focus in previous years and an area of continuing interest for this Committee. The Committee also considers updates every six months on the transposition of EU legislation, ensuring effective scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s progress in transposing EU directives within the required timescale and providing the opportunity to raise questions with the Scottish Government if there is a delay in transposition.

Engagement and Innovation

14. The Committee has sought to engage widely on EU and international relations issues. The Convener has hosted and spoken at a number of events, including, for example an event organised by the Hansard Society and the European Parliament on TTIP. The Committee’s Connecting Scotland inquiry has a strong engagement element, with the Committee planning external visits and meetings as part of the inquiry.

Convener Christina McKelvie hosts an event on TTIP organised by the Hansard Society
15. The Committee has continued to develop its use of social media by engaging with its followers on Twitter, and has also engaged via the Parliament’s Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Scottish Parliament European Union strategy

16. 2014 saw elections to the European Parliament and the appointment of the new College of Commissioners for the European Commission. The Committee therefore agreed to consider the implications of the changes in the political makeup of the European Parliament, the focus of the Scottish MEPs for the next European Parliament session and the approach of the new College of Commissioners as part of the annual EU strategy. It took evidence from some of Scotland’s MEPs and from the Head of the European Commission representation to the UK to inform its consideration of the new European Commission work programme and its priorities.

17. Under the EU strategy, other committees reported on their EU scrutiny for the previous year and identified their priorities for the forthcoming year. The Committee published its report on the *EU engagement and scrutiny by the parliamentary committees over the last year and priorities for EU engagement in the coming year* on 12 March 2015, and the report was debated in the Chamber of the Scottish Parliament on 22 April 2015.

Equalities

18. The Committee continued to mainstream equalities issues throughout the parliamentary year as part of its ongoing work. For example, it launched the second strand of its Connecting Scotland inquiry with Indepen-dance, an inclusive dance group at Scottish Ballet’s headquarters in Glasgow.
Meetings

19. During the reporting period, the Committee met 18 times. Nine meetings were held partly in private and two wholly in private. Thirteen items were taken in private, six to consider draft reports, four for consideration of approaches to inquiries and three to consider the Committee’s work programme. All meetings were held in Edinburgh.