



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

International Relations: Parliamentary travel

21 December 2023

Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 80

Executive summary

1. In accordance with paragraphs 62 and 64 of Section 2 of the Code of Conduct for MSPs, the travel and other costs of a visit which are wholly met by the SPCB, or are approved by the SPCB prior to the visit, are exempt from registration as an overseas visit in the Register of Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament.
2. In May this year the SPCB agreed in principle travel by Members in respect of Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe - Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. It was also agreed that the International Relations Office would provide additional information on specific costs and travel arrangements relating to individual visits.
3. The SPCB is invited to consider and approve the following forthcoming overseas parliamentary travel arrangements.

Issues and options

Committee of the Regions – UK Contact Group, Brussels

4. Members were nominated by the Parliament to sit on the Committee of the Regions – UK Contact Group.
5. The aim of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) – UK Contact Group is to ‘maintain relations with representatives of UK local government and devolved administrations to ensure that political dialogue with these representatives continues.’

6. The [agreed objectives and role of the group](#) is to:
 - act as a forum for continuing dialogue and political partnership between EU and UK devolved legislatures and local and regional governments/authorities and exchange know-how, in particular on cross-border issues;
 - provide the opportunity to discuss problems or opportunities arising from the withdrawal regarding the relationship between these institutions both within the EU and the UK;
 - give these institutions a means of discussing EU legislation and possible changes where the legislation might impact even after the UK's departure from the EU.
7. Kate Forbes MSP and Neil Bibby, both members of the CoR UK Contact Group, have been invited to attend the next meeting of the CoR UK Contact Group taking place on the 24 January in Brussels.
8. This will be the first meeting that the representatives from the Scottish Parliament have been able to attend this Session.

Resource implications

9. The estimated cost for the delegation to attend is £2,500, which covers travel, accommodation, conference registration fees, meals and appropriate incidental expenses for 2 MSPs and 1 accompanying official.

Governance

10. The SPCB will recall that, within the International Strategy, there is a requirement for the International Relations Office to outline to the SPCB why the visit is in person (as opposed to virtual) and the travel options and environmental impact considered by the delegation.
11. Participation by the delegation at the CoR – UK Contact Group would not be possible online, as the session is not broadcast.
12. Travel options between Edinburgh and Brussels are by air or by train. The individual CO₂e footprint for flying economy class (return) is 304kg compared with 48kg for the train. Return economy class flights are an estimated £90 per person. Return rail travel is estimated at £238 per person. The travel times are 1 hour 45 when flying and 7.5 hours when taking the train.

13. IRO recommends the delegation goes by air to Brussels, in order to allow time for additional meetings and networking, and returns by train.

Publication Scheme

14. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

Decision

15. The SPCB is invited to consider the above travel and approve the details of the travel and the associated costs provided.

International Relations Office

December 2023