

## **Minutes – CPG on France, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**MSP in attendance:** Christian Allard MSP, Maureen Watt MSP, Cameron Buchanan MSP, Malcolm Chisholm MSP (part of the meeting)

**Other attendees:** Consul General Pierre-Alain Coffinier, Vicky Crichton, Stuart Donaldson, Vincent Guérin, Christine Jones, Niall MacDonald, Adèle Mortier, Marie-Caroline Nivaigne

**Guests:** Prof Emile Chabal, Edinburgh University, Richard Mowe & Léa Zelenkauskis, French Film Festival UK

### **1. Welcome and introductions**

The AGM was opened by Christian Allard MSP, Convener of the CPG on France, who welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

### **2. Apologies**

Richard Baker MSP  
Malcolm Chisholm MSP (first part of the meeting)  
Sheena Cleeland, Parliamentary staff  
John Rieley, Parliamentary staff

### **3. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### **4. Presentation on French politics by Prof Emile Chabal : BA, MPhil and PhD in History, Chancellor's Fellow at Edinburgh University**

Prof Chabal talks about French politics and France in crisis.  
4 different issues:

- Economic crisis & contraction: 2014 not a very good year for the French economy. 1% planned growth has not materialised, growth is stagnant. Best estimations: 0.4%. Unemployment has continued to rise, around 10%. Very small increase in consumers spending + severe lack of confidence.  
Stagnant industrialised production which hasn't helped.  
Causes behind? One approach is to blame the European situation. Strong argument. Austerity has negative impacts on French economy. Another approach: France has a sclerotic public sector (The Economist). Cost of hiring and keeping staff and lack of flexibility in the labour market. Unemployment: biggest long term pb for the French economy/major issue. François has said he would not stand for the presidency again if he could not succeed to bring unemployment down.

- Crisis of leadership on the left side: François Hollande popularity: worse than any other French President ever with 12%. Lack of No clear vision. Biggest legislation: gay marriage. Lack of confidence from the voters.
- Crisis in the opposition: centre right is not in a better position than the Parti Socialiste. Lots of financial problems and political scandals. Distrust in politics in France. Extended now the Presidents, which is new in France
- Rise of the extreme right: Front national is benefiting a lot from the situation. Marine Le Pen is in a very good position. High score in the elections. Big coup at the European elections. But just 2 MPs and 1 senator so not parliamentary opposition. Controls only 11 municipalities. Marine LP has tried to change the image of the party but hasn't managed to do it completely yet. Would she succeed? Core platform: "préférence nationale". Analysis suggests they are not able to get more than 30% of people who are willing to endorse their ideas and 60% in complete disagreement. No agreement with any other parties.

Broader social cultural issues: strong sense of decline, power and increasing scepticism with the outside world. New division. Open society/open society more than classic division left & right. No real parties who can represent this kind of new division.

#### **5. Presentation of the French Film Festival UK by Richard Mowe, director of FFF UK**

Richard Move explained the story of the French Film Festival UK, which was created in Edinburgh in 1993 and has expanded to the whole UK since. He presented the programme for the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the festival and showed the members a few trailers.

#### **6. Presentation of the Budding chefs' trip to France by Vincent Guérin, Director of the Institut français d'Ecosse (IFE) and co-founder of the Budding Chefs programme**

Vincent Guérin presented an update to the Budding chefs programme presented to the CPG last May. 6 young chefs from Scotiald went to Brittany in the beginning of November to meet French chefs and discover the French larder.

<https://storify.com/BuddingChefs/budding-chefs-2014>

Vincent Guérin showed the members some pictures of the trip.

Next edition of the Budding chefs will be in March 2015 in Scotland.

#### **7. Any other business**

**What to do for other meetings:**

- **Christine Jones suggested letting French business people know about the CPG. A picture is taken to advertise the CPG.**

#### **8. Networking**