

MEETING MINUTES

Cross Party Group on Germany

Tuesday, 6th March, 5.30pm

Committee Room 3

Next Meeting

Tuesday 8th May 2018, 5.30pm

CR1

Attendees

Colin Beattie MSP, Scottish Parliament
Graeme Henderson, Scottish Parliament
Prof. Charlie Jeffery, University of Edinburgh
Ben Macpherson MSP, Scottish Parliament
Stuart McMillan MSP, Scottish Parliament
Sigrid Rieuwerts, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
Harald Tobermann, German citizen
Jens-Peter Voss, Consul General of Germany

Apologies Eleoma Bodammer, Kirsten Herbst-Gray, Nikolai Petersen, Elaine Smith MSP, Barbara Strickland, Petra Wend

Colin Beattie (CB) opened the meeting at 17.30.

Topics Discussed:

1. Approval of previous minutes

The group approved the minutes from the January meeting.

2. Prof. Charlie Jeffery, University of Edinburgh

CB welcomed Prof. Jeffery (CJ) to the group's meeting.

CJ gave the group a presentation on the University of Edinburgh's approach to Brexit. The presentation covered aspects such as:

- The importance of current EU membership to providing research, funding and students
- The challenges and uncertainty arising from Brexit
- The University of Edinburgh's approach to potential students in the period between now and the UK leaving the EU
- Specific examples where EU membership and funding has resulted cross-Europe academic and research achievements
- How the University intends to approach 'good' and 'bad' Brexit outcomes

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- How student funding could work in the years to come
- The University's collaborative plans post-Brexit.

CB asked if EU student numbers were likely to fall if the Scottish Government didn't provide free higher education to EU students. CJ said this was possible but the Scottish Government could create a specific category for EU students.

CB asked if there is a 'drop dead' date for EU students applying to study at the University. CJ noted that the transition period will allow for some leeway, and also highlighted the Prime Minister's comments that science collaboration would still be important post-Brexit.

Sigrid Reiuwerts (SR) noted discrepancies between the ways different universities were approaching post-Brexit cross-Europe collaboration and asked how institutions could best work together. CJ replied that it depended on the successor to Erasmus and that there needed to be a commitment to fund students and staff who need to spend time abroad.

The group then discussed relevant German-Scottish student exchange programmes, the importance of overseas culture and experience, and the relative lack of Scottish students who study abroad compared to those coming to Scotland. Stuart McMillan (SM) suggested footballers who had Scottish/German connections, such as Jorg Albertz, Murdo MacLeod or Alan McNally could potentially promote the merits of living in Germany to Scottish students.

CB thanked CJ for speaking with the group.

3. '1 + 2' Language policy

The group discussed the response from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to the group's letter asking for an update. CB asked the group if the situation on the ground had improved. SR said it hadn't and agreed to send CB an email outlining the situation from her perspective.

ACTION POINT – Sigrid Rieuwerts to email Colin Beattie regarding the '1 + 2' policy in Scotland

4. Meeting attendances/group membership

A spreadsheet of potential new group members was handed out. CB asked the group to look at this and advise of anyone they felt could be approached to join. SM suggested inviting the Germany British Chamber of Commerce and David McAllister MEP to speak at future meetings. SR suggested inviting Steve Vance, Edinburgh Council's Senior Economic Development Officer, to a future meeting to discuss Germany-related topics like Investment and Trade as well as Tourism and German language education.

5. Political/cultural update

Jens-Peter Voss (JPV) updated the group on the political situation in Germany, highlighting the coalition talks between the SPD and CDU. CB asked if policies are

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likely to be influenced by the change in the German Parliament. JPV replied that there are concerns such policies won't be changed, in particular as the SPD were hoping to 'renew' in opposition but now find themselves as one of the major parties in coalition.

CB spoke of the UK Government's Brexit analysis papers he had recently been allowed to view, and also of his recent meeting with students from the Konrad-Adenaur Foundation.

SM spoke of Greenock Ocean Terminal's likely increase in tourists arriving in years ahead, partly due to cruise vessels moving from the Mediterranean to North Europe.

SR spoke of a VisitScotland video, targeting young students, that was being re-posted by students at the University of Mainz.

CB closed the meeting at 7.10pm.