

# **EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 25 May 2004  
(*Afternoon*)

Session 2

£5.00

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## EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2004, Session 2

### CONVENER

\*Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP)

### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind)

\*Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP)

\*Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con)

\*Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab)

\*Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

\*Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab)

\*Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP)

\*attended

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Imrie

### ASSISTANT CLERKS

Nick Hawthorne

David Simpson

### LOCATION

Committee Room 3



# Scottish Parliament

## European and External Relations Committee

Tuesday 25 May 2004

(Afternoon)

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 13:33]

### Convener's Report

**The Convener (Richard Lochhead):** Welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2004 of the European and External Relations Committee. The bulk of the meeting will be taken up by a discussion of our report on regional funding, which will take place in private. We will spend the first 15 minutes of the meeting on the other agenda items. We have received no apologies, so I proceed to item 1, which is the convener's report.

We have received a response from the First Minister to our invitation to appear before the committee to speak about his current role as president of the regions with legislative powers group. Unfortunately, as members will note, the First Minister has declined our invitation and suggested that it would be more appropriate for Andy Kerr, the minister with responsibility for external relations, to speak to the committee about Regleg's activities. The response is self-explanatory, so I invite comments from members.

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I find this dismaying. Frankly, the First Minister's letter is almost unintelligible. I do not know who wrote it, but it does not look like the work of a civil servant.

In the first paragraph of the letter, the First Minister states that

"the opportunity to address the Committee about the work of REGLEG that is already underway is timely",

so why the hell does he not take it? For the sake of the *Official Report*, I ask members to excuse my language. The second paragraph of the letter appears almost unrelated to the first.

It is disturbing that it has taken the First Minister so long to reply to us, given that he received letters dated 25 November 2003 and 25 February 2004. The issue of Scottish Opera cannot have been occupying his attention for all that time.

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** In the second paragraph of the letter, the First Minister states that Andy Kerr

"has portfolio responsibility for external relations".

However, the First Minister is the president of Regleg and he must be more aware than Andy Kerr could be of the detailed work that is under way.

Like Keith Raffan, I am very disappointed by the response. We are halfway through the presidency, but no report back has been made to the committee or to the Parliament. Will we receive an end-of-term report in another six months? That would prevent the European and External Relations Committee from having any input to the process.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** Once again, I find it surprising that the First Minister is not prepared to appear before the committee. His decision seems fairly discourteous to the Parliament, of which the committee is a constituent part. Irrespective of that, I would like some information on this issue. I want to know how many meetings of Regleg have taken place; how many sub-groups the organisation has set up; who, besides the First Minister, has attended Regleg meetings; how many meetings have been attended by Andy Kerr; and what the First Minister and Andy Kerr regard as the positive outcomes of Regleg's establishment.

**The Convener:** I invite Dennis Canavan to speak.

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** I did not express a desire to speak, but as you have invited me to do so I would like to express my disappointment that the First Minister has not accepted our invitation to appear before the committee to discuss these matters. It is not good enough to say that Andy Kerr could attend. If the First Minister is attending Regleg meetings, we want to hear what has happened from the horse's mouth—if "horse" and "mouth" are the appropriate words.

**The Convener:** Although you did not indicate a desire to speak, you took the opportunity to do so. Well done.

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** This does not worry me as much as it worries other members. I am not sure how many Regleg meetings have taken place. When we discussed the matter at previous meetings, I said that I would be happy to receive an indication of Regleg's work load—to which Phil Gallie referred—and a written report. I was not too exercised about whether the First Minister should appear before the committee. If he did so, to be honest, I would want to ask him about issues other than Regleg.

**Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab):** I have listened to the points that Phil Gallie made and the questions that he asked. Frankly, it would be preposterous to expect the First Minister to take time out of his schedule to answer those

legitimate questions. I am sure that the member is more than capable of penning a letter setting out those questions. Alternatively, the clerks could pen such a letter on the convener's behalf. If every committee expected the First Minister to turn up every time that there was a wee wheeze that it wanted to explore with him, he would do nothing but attend committee meetings.

**The Convener:** This was our first and only invitation to the First Minister to speak to the committee.

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** Some of the usual synthetic indignation is being expressed. I have read the Executive's reply twice and I see no refusal by the First Minister to attend. All that the letter does is to volunteer an appearance by Andy Kerr. If it is ever appropriate for the First Minister to attend a committee meeting, there is no reason that he should not do so. However, I do not think that this is a big deal. The First Minister has not declined our request.

**Dennis Canavan:** Not explicitly.

**Mr Raffan:** In that case, it has taken him the period from 18 November until now to produce a rather delphic response. If he had said either yes or no, we would be completely in the light.

My indignation is not synthetic. Parliament should come first—the Executive is accountable to Parliament. This is not “a wee wheeze”, as Alasdair Morrison condescendingly dismissed it. Regleg should be, and is, a major thing for Scotland. We will probably not have the presidency of Regleg again for another 30 years.

I want to know what on earth is going on. We are halfway through the Scottish presidency and we have heard virtually nothing about it, apart from an answer to an occasional question in the chamber. The European and External Relations Committee has heard nothing and it is right for us to ask the First Minister to appear before the committee. Given Irene Oldfather's commitment to Europe, I am surprised that she thinks that there are many more important things than Regleg.

**Mr Home Robertson:** I rest my case.

**Phil Gallie:** I inform Alasdair Morrison that I did not set out with my earlier questions in mind. They simply came to mind following our invitation to the First Minister.

As Keith Raffan said, we have the presidency of Regleg for only a short time, so it seems to me that, if Regleg is all that important, it would be only courteous and responsible for the First Minister to come and explain to us exactly what Regleg is about and what is hoped for it. I recognise that we could write to the First Minister. However, we are a committee of the Parliament and my understanding is that when a person who is in a

senior position—I presume that the presidency is a senior position, and not just a matter of kidology—is invited to come along and tell us about it, they would be expected to do so.

**Mr Morrison:** I want to make a correction. I have never dismissed Regleg as a wheeze—

**Mr Raffan:** A wee wheeze.

**Mr Morrison:** I have never dismissed Regleg as a wee wheeze or a big wheeze. Regleg is important. If Keith Raffan and Phil Gallie have been greatly exercised by these issues over the past few months, I fail to understand why neither of them has written to the First Minister in those terms, urging him to write to them as individual MSPs. Irrespective of what the committee as a body corporate wants to achieve, I would have thought that waiting for a response since 18 November was quite a while to wait.

**Mr Raffan:** Exactly—that is why I want the First Minister to reply.

**The Convener:** Irrespective of the views of individual committee members, the committee previously expressed its view on the matter and urged the First Minister to attend a committee meeting. As John Home Robertson pointed out, the First Minister has not given an outright refusal to do so; nor has he given an outright acceptance. Members want to ask a number of questions. I suggest, therefore, that we put a separate item on a future agenda to take evidence from a minister on Regleg. I also suggest that we reply to the First Minister and invite him to come along—or for a minister to come along, if he does not want to—to answer questions on Regleg. Would that be a suitable way forward? Does anyone disagree with that suggestion?

**Irene Oldfather:** The committee has valid and legitimate concerns about the work of Regleg. In our previous discussions, I have said consistently that it is right and proper to ask questions about Regleg. However, I do not think that I have ever said that we need to have the First Minister at a meeting. We have urged the First Minister to attend a meeting but I have always expressed my concerns about that, while saying that I would be happy for the questions to be asked. The response in the First Minister's letter is that Andy Kerr has portfolio responsibility for Regleg. Andy Kerr has always indicated willingness to come to committee meetings and if we are going to get him along to the committee, we might want to deal with other issues as well as with Regleg. I would welcome Andy Kerr's attendance at a committee meeting to speak on Regleg as part of a more general session.

**The Convener:** As convener, I appreciate that not all members will agree 100 per cent with any proposal. However, given that Regleg is a

substantive issue and that all members agree that it is so, it would be worth while having a separate agenda item on Regleg.

We could write to the First Minister and ask whether he is willing to attend a meeting and, if he is not, whether one of his ministers will attend in his place to answer questions. I suggest that as a compromise. I am not demanding that the First Minister comes to a meeting; we would just be asking him to do so. If anyone disagrees fundamentally with my proposal, they can suggest an alternative to the committee.

**Mr Raffan:** I am happy for us to proceed along those lines, but I think that, in advance of any meeting, we will need a full briefing in answer to the questions in your letter of 7 May to make the meeting thoroughly worth while.

**Phil Gallie:** I am not particularly concerned about the First Minister attending a committee meeting; I am particularly concerned about the president of Regleg, when he is sitting on our doorstep, attending a meeting. That is the point.

**Irene Oldfather:** We have written to the First Minister—indeed, I think that we have written to him twice—and we have received a reply from him. I am not clear what is to be gained by writing to him again. If our interest is in Regleg, we should follow the suggestion that the First Minister makes in his letter and write to Andy Kerr.

13:45

**The Convener:** Okay. I was simply responding to a number of comments from members who are unhappy with the First Minister's stance. I am perfectly relaxed about whether we write to the First Minister or to Andy Kerr, but Regleg deserves to be a separate item on our agenda. I suggest that we write to Andy Kerr, the Minister for Finance and Public Services, to ask whether, if the First Minister is unable to attend our meeting, he would come in the First Minister's place.

**Phil Gallie:** As John Home Robertson pointed out, the First Minister has not declined. We should write to the First Minister, as the convener suggested. If the First Minister declines the invitation and sends Andy Kerr, so be it. Andy Kerr appears regularly at the committee and he does well when he comes before us. The issue is not about Andy Kerr; it is about to whom we should send the letter. We should send it to the First Minister.

**The Convener:** In that case, the remaining question is whom we should invite. I think that we have agreed to invite someone and to make a separate slot on the agenda for Regleg. Our final decision is whether we want to invite the First Minister. I would be happy to write to him on the

understanding that we say that, if he is unable or unwilling to attend, Andy Kerr, the Minister for Finance and Public Services, can come in his place. If another member wants to make a counter proposal, they can do so.

**Irene Oldfather:** I will not force the issue.

**The Convener:** In that case, are we agreed?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** The next item in the convener's report is the monthly report on the Scottish Parliament's external relations activities. Once again, we have the report on inward visits to and outward visits from the Parliament.

**Dennis Canavan:** I note that a delegation went to the United States of America for the tartan day celebrations. The delegation does not seem to have been very representative of the Parliament. I have heard complaints that no women were included and that there was no representation of any of the three smallest parties, or indeed the three independents. I knew nothing about the selection of the delegation until after the event, when it appeared in the newspapers.

Unlike the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which follows a laudable practice of openness and accountability in that it invites all interested members to apply for membership of its delegations, other delegations that go out from the Parliament—including the tartan day delegation—are formed by a method of selection that seems to be rather secretive and not very accountable. How were the members of the Parliament's tartan army or tartan team selected and what criteria were used? I suggest that we write to the Presiding Officer to that effect. The subject of tartan day has cropped up as part of our investigations into matters such as Scotland's role in the world and Parliament's relations with the rest of the world.

**The Convener:** I do not disagree with the points that Dennis Canavan makes, but I remind members that our remit does not extend to the Parliament's activities. The composition of parliamentary delegations is not part of our remit. It might be more appropriate—

**Dennis Canavan:** You could ask.

**The Convener:** I will take soundings from the committee.

**Mr Raffan:** A lot of areas are reserved to Westminster, but that does not stop us debating them. I agree thoroughly with Dennis Canavan, who is largely responsible for the openness of the CPA. I remember that it was Dennis's motion at the CPA annual general meeting that set out the way in which members would receive application forms for delegations by e-mail.

I did not even know who from my own party was part of the tartan day delegation. I have a slight feeling that selection might be the result of leadership patronage—perhaps I should be more rebellious and then I might get an offer to go. The selection process should be done openly. In view of the fact that there is now a six-party system in the Parliament, the process should be opened up. Perhaps we should suggest to the Presiding Officer that six people should go and that one of the delegation should be from the smaller parties one year and from the independents the next year.

**Irene Oldfather:** Dennis Canavan made a valid point about the representation of women. If we write to the Presiding Officer, we should point out that that aspect of the delegation was rather disappointing.

**The Convener:** We can send a letter from members of the committee to the appropriate authorities. Under the circumstances, I think that that would be the best way of proceeding. Are members happy with that proposal?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Members will be able to see the letter once it has been sent.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Perhaps I should mention a bit of private enterprise. Ten days ago, I met Yasser Arafat and took the opportunity to express concern about the situation in that part of the world. I also expressed Scottish support for a fair settlement in Palestine.

**The Convener:** Thank you. For the *Official Report*, would you briefly clarify the nature of your trip and confirm that it was not made for the Parliament?

**Mr Home Robertson:** I was there with Edinburgh Direct Aid.

**The Convener:** Thank you.

The next item under the convener's report—

**Mr Raffan:** I have one issue to raise.

**The Convener:** You should be brief.

**Mr Raffan:** The paper mentions the plenary session of the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body on Sunday 18 April to Tuesday 20 April, which Margaret Ewing attended. The Nordic Council and the Executive's somewhat ambivalent stance towards it have previously figured in our discussions. Can we get a copy of what was said in that debate?

**Mrs Ewing:** I can acquire copies without any difficulty through the external liaison unit. The document was interesting and two MSPs—Murray Tosh, who was the leader of the delegation, and David McLetchie—spoke to it. The feedback that

we received from the Nordic Council about its interest in Scotland and Ireland in particular, and the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, was interesting. It was interesting that England was not mentioned at any point in the evidence. The report is good and is a worthwhile read. I will make a note and get copies of it.

**The Convener:** Thank you. If you could send a copy to the clerks, they will distribute it to committee members.

The next item under the convener's report is a proposed committee away day at some point during the summer or autumn to take stock of the first year of the new parliamentary session. All committees are being encouraged to have an away day at least once a year. If members are happy with the proposal, we can agree in principle to have an away day; a suitable date can be agreed soon.

**Irene Oldfather:** Getting round the table is always a good idea and we could consider our forward work programme for the next year. It would be helpful to have as much consultation as possible. I know that the clerks will consult committee members. Trying to accommodate everyone's holidays over the summer can be difficult, so early autumn might be better than the summer for an away day.

I would like to put down a bid. In the past, we have said that Ayrshire is a nice venue for away days. I know that the committee has tended not to get out much, but we would be pleased to welcome members to Ayrshire. I know that my colleague Phil Gallie will support that proposal.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Getting to Barra would be easier.

**The Convener:** I am sure that we would all be happy to meet in Arran, if that is what is being suggested. Perhaps we will discuss that matter further at some point soon. I am sure that all members will want their constituencies to be put in the hat.

**Mr Morrison:** Perhaps a meeting after Parliament has opened would be better. When does it open?

**The Convener:** On 9 October.

**Mr Morrison:** When are we back after the recess? That is what I meant.

**Irene Oldfather:** Around 20 to 30 August, I think.

**The Convener:** We will not agree dates at the moment—we will return to that matter. We will simply agree in principle to the proposal.

The final item under the convener's report is a proposal for another taking stock meeting,



specifically on our promoting Scotland overseas inquiry. We have agreed in principle to hold such a meeting. The clerks will e-mail everyone in order to choose a date in June and we will simply pick a date—most likely a Wednesday—that most members can make, if that is appropriate. We should have the meeting sooner rather than later.

**Irene Oldfather:** I have a suggestion to make.

**The Convener:** Is it that the meeting should be held in Ayrshire?

**Irene Oldfather:** No—I was not going to suggest that.

By the time that we agree a date, we will be into June. If the meeting were to be held towards the end of June, we could have a half-hour to 45-minute session and then have a committee lunch. We could end on a positive note, which might be nice at one of our last meetings.

**The Convener:** I am willing to make two promises to the committee. Our last meeting before the summer recess will not be on 10 June—it will take place later in June and there will be a lunch. We have been discussing the arrangements and I am happy to take on board members' comments.

## Scottish Executive (Scrutiny)

13:54

**The Convener:** We move to pre and post-council scrutiny. I invite members to comment on the papers.

**Phil Gallie:** Can we go through them one by one?

**The Convener:** You are the only member who has indicated that they have comments to make, so you may kick off.

**Phil Gallie:** My first comment relates to the agriculture and fisheries council. I want to know the detail of what the Executive is supporting in respect of regional management.

**Mrs Ewing:** What management?

**The Convener:** I point out that the matter was agreed yesterday. Perhaps we can return to it when we receive the post-council report, which we will have for our next meeting.

**Mr Raffan:** Can we go through the items in turn? I agree about Europass. The extension of Tempus is also very interesting. Another issue is the proposed amendments to the legal basis of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. Given the recent debate that took place in the Parliament on the skills gap, those issues are worth highlighting. We should monitor them closely and obtain more information.

**The Convener:** Do other members have comments about the education, youth and culture council?

**Phil Gallie:** I refer to paragraph 5 of the paper, which concerns vocational training. There is a move towards taking a harmonised approach to the issue, but in reality different standards and regulations govern vocational training, especially in engineering, in most countries in Europe. I wonder what account is being taken of those differences and whether the regulation to which the paper refers is likely to change in the future. Technically, electricity supply can operate at different frequencies and transmission voltages. There are also differences in distribution. I do not think that one can take a broad-brush approach to vocational training and establish common training patterns.

**The Convener:** Are you suggesting that you want more background information?

**Phil Gallie:** Yes. That is all that I can ask for, but I would like to know specifically what account is taken of the various regulatory systems that have been set up, in particular by engineering institutions, across Europe.

**The Convener:** I ask members to check that their mobile phones are switched off. I understand that there is interference with the sound system, which affects the official report.

There are no further comments on the education, youth and culture council. Do members have comments on the report for the employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs council?

**Phil Gallie:** Paragraph 10 refers to health cards. It strikes me that there is a link with identity cards. Is it worth our following up on that issue?

**Mr Raffan:** I want to make the opposite point on the same issue. I am strongly in favour of health cards, because such cards will help those who visit, live and work abroad and provide them with much easier access to the health service, which is highly desirable and may occasionally save their lives. For that reason, it is worth our finding out more about the issue.

My second point relates to the prevention of cardiovascular disease and the Scottish Executive's comments on page 12 of the paper. There is reference to diet and smoking, but there is no reference to alcohol consumption. I find that surprising, in view of the national plan and local plans for alcohol and the major part that alcohol misuse plays in Scottish ill health.

**Phil Gallie:** I want to clarify that Keith Raffan and I are batting on the same wicket. I am in no way critical of health cards—I approve of them. I was simply asking a question about their wider use.

14:00

**Irene Oldfather:** Although I agree with both my colleagues on the health cards, we have a system in place at the moment. Unfortunately, the E111 is a paper document that can get torn, tattered and lost. The idea is that the card would replace such paper documents, but more needs to be done to promote it, because not enough people who go to Europe realise that they qualify for emergency treatment. That is important.

I want to draw attention to the work that the Irish presidency is doing. I note from paragraph 12 on page 12 of the briefing paper the progress that is being made on tobacco control, which I welcome. It is good that the Irish are taking such an aggressive approach to the issue, because it has not been dealt with for too long.

**Mr Raffan:** Hear, hear.

**The Convener:** If members are happy, we will get some more background information on the points that Phil Gallie and Keith Raffan have raised. Members can return to those points at a future date if they think that we should take more action.

Are there any further comments on the reports?

**Mr Raffan:** I have some brief comments on the pre-council report for the transport, telecommunications and energy council. Paragraph 7, in the section on maritime transport, mentions the proposed directive of the European Parliament and the Council on enhancing port security. Although Perth harbour, which I visited on Friday, is relatively small, it is not unimportant to the city. It is having to spend a huge amount of money, both in capital expenditure and in running costs, to improve security. The issue is important. Security may have been too lax in the past, but Perth harbour now faces a massive bill. Although it is stated that the directive is controversial and is unlikely to be agreed this year, we should note the proposal, because it would have a direct impact on Scotland. I am sure that it would affect harbours other than Perth to an even greater extent.

**The Convener:** Okay, we will note that.

Are there any points on telecommunications or energy?

**Phil Gallie:** On energy, I note that paragraph 14 talks about an intended directive on eco-design requirements. In that regard, I wonder whether the air conditioning in the new Scottish Parliament building will comply. Can we find out whether hydrofluorocarbons are involved? HFCs are now thought to be a major problem, just as chlorofluorocarbons were.

**The Convener:** We could ask the clerks to speak to John Home Robertson later.

**Mr Home Robertson:** What?

**The Convener:** The clerks could speak to you to find out about the Holyrood building.

**Phil Gallie:** John, do you know what the base for the air conditioning system is? Are HFCs being used?

**The Convener:** That is not really a matter for the committee. If you insist, we could look into it.

**Phil Gallie:** If it is not a matter that concerns the committee directly, perhaps we should draw the Presiding Officer's attention to the intention of the directive in question, to allow him to make a judgment on it.

**The Convener:** We would be happy to do that.

**Dennis Canavan:** Provided that it would not result in an increase in the cost.

**Phil Gallie:** We have to meet the cost of European regulations and directives.

**Dennis Canavan:** Are you arguing for the cost of the Holyrood building to escalate?

**Phil Gallie:** No, I am arguing for the European regulation.

**The Convener:** We will copy that point to the Presiding Officer's office.

**Mr Home Robertson:** You can copy it to me, if you like.

**Phil Gallie:** Paragraph 15(c) deals with a requirement that we have spoken of in the past, which is about safeguarding the security of the electricity supply. I wonder whether we should send notification of that requirement to the Executive and ask it to check it against its targets for renewable energy.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Hear, hear. You are quite right.

**Phil Gallie:** Thank you, John.

**The Convener:** I notice that the report says "possible", so that might not be an agenda item at the council. If that is confirmed as an item on the agenda, we could do what you suggest. It is anticipated that it may be on the council's agenda.

**Phil Gallie:** The paper says that there is a proposal for a directive. We all know what happens once such proposals are launched—they sneak through in a couple of years.

**The Convener:** I move on to the general affairs and external relations council. Are there any comments? If not, are there any comments on the other post-council reports: the agriculture and fisheries council on 26 and 27 April and the justice and home affairs council on 29 April?

**Members:** No.

**The Convener:** You have had your chance.

**Mr Raffan:** What about the correspondence?

**The Convener:** We are still chasing up the correspondence on post-council reports. We have not had a response.

**Mr Raffan:** I make a brief comment on that. It is important for us to get that information. To give one example, Europass will have a national agency. A lot of our local authorities—certainly those in my region—are making bids for civil service job dispersal. They are doing some good presentations and it is important for them to have as much advance information as possible so that they can work with the Executive to bid for the European Union agencies.

**The Convener:** We will certainly chase that up and we will return to the matter at the next meeting. Are you happy with that?

**Irene Oldfather:** May I make a suggestion in relation to that? A number of agencies are coming up for grabs. One that I have already identified, and on which I have lodged a members' business motion, is the European languages agency. It might be helpful for the committee to have a draft

report on outstanding decisions on agencies, so that we can lobby appropriately and identify and target one or two. It will not be helpful to go for everything. We must consider what we have in Scotland and which ones we should go for.

**The Convener:** We discussed that at a previous meeting. We sent the letter as a result of that discussion and we have agreed to bring the matter back as an agenda item at a future date.

**Irene Oldfather:** That is what I am asking.

**The Convener:** Your points have been made before.

**Irene Oldfather:** Right, so the languages—

**The Convener:** That is all in train. The clerks will bring back a report and we will have a separate discussion on it.

## Sift

14:07

**The Convener:** The final agenda item is the sift paper. I invite comments.

**Mrs Ewing:** The first item in the documents of special importance is the state aid scoreboard, which relates to our inquiry into structural funds. We should request the explanatory memorandum, which is available on request, according to the sift document. I do not know whether it is already available or whether I missed it, but it would be useful.

**The Convener:** I am told that we get the document automatically. The clerks will send it around to members.

**Mr Raffan:** On the second point on the sift paper, it is important for us to follow up the white paper on a new impetus for European youth, which was also mentioned in the pre-council reports, because it is important in relation to cultural exchanges. Secondly, if I may go beyond the documents of special importance, there is mention of a communication from the Commission, entitled "Fostering structural change: an industrial policy for an enlarged Europe". I would like to get a copy of that, particularly in view of the comments that were made last week in Paris and the concerns of the French and the Germans about what is happening in the enlargement countries in relation to structural economic change and industrial change, which seem to be way ahead of what is happening in some of the older member states of the EU.

**The Convener:** We will ensure that the green papers are brought to the attention of the other committees, as mentioned in the sift paper.

As there are no further comments, I bring the public session of the meeting to a close.

14:08

*Meeting continued in private until 16:33.*

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