

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE

Tuesday 25 January 2000
(*Afternoon*)

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE

2nd Meeting 2000 (Committee Room 2)

CONVENER :

*Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER:

*Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

*Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West)

*Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab)

*Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP)

*Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

*David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con)

*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD)

Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con)

*Allan Wilson (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

*attended

COMMITTEE CLERK:

Stephen Imrie

ASSISTANT CLERK:

David Simpson

Scottish Parliament

European Committee

Tuesday 25 January 2000

(Afternoon)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:04*]

The Convener (Hugh Henry): Welcome to the second meeting this year of the European Committee. I have received apologies from Tavish Scott and Ben Wallace. Irene Oldfather will arrive slightly late.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I pass on apologies from Winnie Ewing.

Work Programme

The Convener: The first item on the agenda is the paper on the committee's work programme for the coming period, which is linked to the paper that has been provided for item 3 on the agenda, on the role and tasks of committee reporters. I will discuss the two papers together.

I do not propose at this stage to reopen the debate about who will do what, but to have a technical discussion on how and when the programme will be taken forward. When we discuss the role and tasks of the reporters, I will want to make some comments about the way in which we will proceed.

On the work programme, we have agreed that we will identify one person to take forward each issue. We have also suggested that each person will co-operate with others who have expressed an interest in the same issues. That means that there will be at least one clearly identified person with responsibility for an issue, who must meet the targets and deadlines.

I suggest that, having examined the topics, members should let Stephen Imrie know as soon as possible the topics in which they are interested and on which they want to co-operate with the reporter. I know, for example, that Irene Oldfather has a particular interest in monetary union and enlargement. If the system becomes cumbersome, we will take a decision later about who should support whom, but if the system is manageable, the lead person will be responsible for co-ordinating any support they receive from other individuals.

Are there any questions or comments on the technical aspects of the paper, the proposals or the timetable? Stephen, do you want to comment

on anything?

Stephen Imrie (Committee Clerk): The only substantial change that has been made to the document is to the timetable on page 7, where we have tried to include some of the advice that we have taken on the agendas of external bodies, such as the European Council. We have tried to arrange the work of the individual reporters to fit in with that external timetable. The committee agreed that it wanted to make maximum use of the work of reporters. To do that, we needed to know when external bodies, such as the European Council, would hold meetings to discuss particular issues. The rest of the document remains the same as the previous version.

Allan Wilson (Cunninghame North) (Lab): Am I correct in assuming, therefore, that if, for example, Cathy Jamieson and I identified a close interest in each other's area of responsibility and saw obvious links between the two, we could combine them definitively in a single study, rather than do two separate reports? Would the structure allow that if we agreed that that was the optimum way forward?

The Convener: There is no point in carrying out two separate pieces of work on the same subject. There may be agreed areas of overlap, in which case two reporters might agree which of them would take the lead on a particular issue, with support from the other person. We will come on to the remit and content of reports when we discuss the role of the reporter.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Note 6 on page 7 of the briefing paper mentions the intergovernmental conference, which is due to complete by December 2000. When would be the optimum time to have a report ready for consideration by the committee and for possible input into the IGC? Would that report have to be ready by the middle of the year?

The Convener: Although we do not have any dates yet, Dennis, you are right to say that we will need a few months for such a report. The committee clerk and I have discussed the idea of putting the IGC on our agenda as a separate item as soon as possible, because we will have to address a number of issues ahead of the IGC. Where that impacts on your work, I will ask the clerk to ensure that he gives you the earliest possible warning of any issue that you might have to report on.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I have raised the issue of funding for support staff before. I asked whether the clerks felt they had to attend meetings to get information or whether I could receive funding for one of my own support staff to take notes if I have to visit salmon growers in Shetland.

The Convener: I will come back to that issue in a minute when we discuss the role of the reporter. At the moment, I want to concentrate on the content, the timetable and the procedure.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I hope that I am not digressing too much, but at the top of page 4 of the paper is a table that lists various organisations from which we could take evidence. Will reporters use the list for work on their own issues or is it separate from the issues on which they will be reporting?

The Convener: It is a bit of both. Some of the organisations listed have specific interests in particular areas, which would mean, for example, that Cathy might need to consult a range of them in her work on the third sector. However, over the next year or two, the committee will want to hear their views on more general matters. As Cathy is reporting on a very specific issue, we hope that she will approach those and other organisations—the list is not exhaustive. The list is also relevant to Bruce's work on monetary union. Furthermore, issues about European education and training will be of interest to the organisations grouped in the industry and business section, so they will not be slotted into one particular report.

Dr Jackson: That clarifies the matter.

The Convener: We have said that we are looking for maximum co-operation from other members who wish to support reporters. Do committee members agree the paper?

Members indicated agreement.

14:15

The Convener: We will now turn to the briefing paper, "Role and Tasks of a Committee Reporter". I think that it will highlight a number of issues, including the one that Maureen Macmillan has just raised.

I would like to make some general comments on the paper; Stephen Imrie will then speak on the technical aspects, particularly the matters Maureen identified.

A reporter works on behalf of the committee, not as an individual working in isolation. We hope that the reporters will work alongside me, as convener, and Cathy Jamieson, as deputy convener.

Before any substantial work is done, we want to ensure that although we are seeking flexibility, whatever we agree at the end is agreed by consensus. We suggest that the best way to ensure that the report has consensus is to ensure that it broadly reflects the views of the committee as it goes on.

We would like the reporter's remit to be agreed by the committee so that we do not discover that

someone has wasted six or seven months working on something that has no support. In any contact with external organisations or with the media, the reporter is not working on behalf of the committee, because the final report has still to be agreed. It would be wrong to infer that the reporter's views will necessarily be those of the committee. Reporters are therefore asked to be circumspect in how they present themselves.

Before anything happens, and particularly for those with responsibilities early on, it would be useful to get an early indication of proposed remits so that the committee can give a degree of ownership to the process.

Stephen Imrie: The briefing paper is fairly self-explanatory in terms of the reporter's suggested means of operation in relation to the rest of the committee.

I refer members to page 6, which starts with "Supplementary resources". It relates to the point raised by Maureen Macmillan. I had always envisaged that the most appropriate way to progress research on the item would be to form a small project team for each subject. It would be led by the reporter identified for the issue. The reporter will clearly be the point of contact for external organisations that may wish to discuss the relevant matters.

The small project team would consist of the reporter and any other members of the committee—or, indeed, of other committees—who are interested in particular subjects. We are well aware that some items under discussion overlap with the remits of other committees, and it is important to consider their views.

With members' agreement, the teams should also include one clerk, so that the clerks are aware of timetables, of the points being discussed and of meetings that have been set up, so that they can try to facilitate those meetings.

On that specific point, and as far as research is concerned, the clerks are available within specific constraints—there are only two full-time clerks on this committee—to try to support members in the research and meetings that they need to undertake.

I am aware that some members have their own researchers or assistants. They would form an integral part of the research effort. We also have resources in the Parliament, of course, in the form of the Scottish Parliament Information Centre.

I will discuss with the members of SPICe who serve the committee whether we can ask for specific research to help the reporters. We would have to go through a formal mechanism to do that.

We are also able to commission external research, although we must ask for the authority to

do that. We can commission consultants from universities, for example, to undertake research on our behalf. We may also consider having advisers—again, we must follow a formal process if we want to pursue that course.

We can take evidence in different forms, such as informal meetings with external bodies or formal evidence sessions in committee meetings. There are many possibilities. We are always encouraged to be innovative and creative in engaging with external bodies. The clerks will be able to advise members on that. Members may be aware of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee's idea of holding a debate with representatives of business. We can also set up internet chats.

There are many different ways in which we can gather evidence and carry out research. However, the nucleus would be the small project team, which would report to the committee on carrying out research and produce the terms of reference to be agreed by the committee. The draft report would follow the same route.

I do not know the answer to Maureen Macmillan's question about whether it is possible for clerks not to attend external meetings, but to allow assistants or researchers to be paid to do so. I will raise the matter with the authorities. There is no particular requirement for the clerk to the project team to attend every meeting with an external body. If it were more appropriate for someone else to be involved, I would be quite comfortable with that. However, I would have to look into the legalities of paying a researcher to facilitate committee business.

Maureen Macmillan: I was thinking about travel expenses. If I am going to interview people connected with the salmon industry, that will take place in the north. It would be easier for my researcher from Dingwall to come with me to Achiltibuie than it would be for a clerk to come from Edinburgh. If I drove, that would be fine, but if we had to fly to Shetland, for example, I would hope that his fare would be reimbursed.

The Convener: We are suggesting that members identify any travel requirements. We are not in overall control of the process; some things need to be agreed elsewhere.

Allan Wilson: I have a point on the same issue. The paragraph at the bottom of page 7 seeks to identify the obvious costs that might arise from the exercise. There is a contradiction between the proper emphasis that is placed on the work load of the reporter and the suggestion that additional expenses cannot be met. Members who are based in the west of Scotland incur costs coming to Edinburgh; taking evidence elsewhere may reduce those costs.

Stephen Imrie: Perhaps I have given the wrong

impression; allow me to advise the member of the details. I understand that travel on committee business within Scotland would not have to be formally approved by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body or the Parliamentary Bureau. Travel outwith Scotland on committee business would have to be formally approved by the SPCB because there would be an impact on the members' allowances scheme, which the SPCB administers. Both the Parliamentary Bureau and the SPCB must give approval for travel outwith the United Kingdom. There are various mechanisms for approving travel, but that does not mean that travel as such, and certainly travel within Scotland, will cause particular problems.

The Convener: Rather than getting bogged down in details, members should develop their work programmes and identify what they need to fulfil their remit. At that stage, we can address any problems that arise. As it is, we could speculate endlessly about potential problems.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): In some respects, I am piggybacking on Maureen Macmillan. She has to go to the far north, but I might want to go even further north to find out how they do things round about the Baltic.

The Convener: Those points have been addressed in the paper. We have suggested a way of dealing with that, but the final responsibility will not lie with us.

Bruce Crawford: Mine is a slightly different point. I understand the points that you made about ensuring that the committee has a shared point of view on any reports. That is what the role of reporter is all about. Some of the subject areas that reporters are considering could give rise to political disagreement between parties. I appreciate that we should try to resolve that, but there may be situations in which only a couple of members have a completely contrary view to everybody else.

How might we deal with such a situation? I can see disagreement arising over the euro, for instance. A report might not have the support of every committee member, but a balancing exercise that shows both sides of the argument could lead to a rather anodyne position.

The Convener: You give a good example of an issue on which there could be disagreement. However, whether people agree or disagree, the debate on monetary union must take place. We must consider the implications—economic, political and social—of monetary union for Scotland. We have an appropriate forum for initiating debate on such an issue. I am therefore looking for a remit that sets out the agenda and the main issues.

Bruce Crawford: That is fine.

The Convener: If areas of disagreement remain, we should admit that early on in the process. When we write the report, those with different opinions can put in an amendment to any proposal. However, the bulk of the report should be relatively non-contentious, stating the advantages, disadvantages, problems and pertinent issues.

Bruce Crawford: It may just end up with an amendment to the report, and we must accept that.

The Convener: There will be such issues, but we will have to make a decision.

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): If such reports are prepared as I understood they will be, areas of disagreement will be identified and set out. The committee may want to go one way or another on those points.

If we are working on the basis of identifying the issues, I do not think that there will be a problem. There may not be agreement on an issue, but I do not think that there will be a problem with the approach. I have every confidence that Bruce Crawford will not approach his task as a campaigning one, but rather as the objective analysis that the paper foresees.

The Convener: This does not apply just to that report. When any report comes back to the committee, each member of the committee will have the right to propose amendments to it before it comes within the final ownership of the committee. Members will disagree on some issues. The purpose of the exercise is to stimulate debate. The committee can take more issues forward this way and members will have the opportunity to influence the final report. Ultimately, there may be a point at which we will have to agree to disagree and have a vote on a fundamental issue.

14:30

Ms MacDonald: Can we have a minority report?

The Convener: Let us not speculate. We should start our work and if we hit problems we can address issues such as that.

Dr Sylvia Jackson: Before we go any further, I would like it to be agreed that when we do the rapporteur work, we will produce a balanced and objective report. After the discussion, amendments can be proposed and there might be majority or minority reports, as Margo MacDonald mentioned. Rapporteurs should present the facts. I know that they can be influenced a little by a member's ideological point of view, but the report should be as factual as possible.

The Convener: We should not start to run

before we can walk. We should start the process. We have agreed the principles, the topics and the timetables. This is a learning process; we will resolve problems as we go along. If there are difficulties later, we can have a thorough discussion about them. We should not attempt to address every potential solution before we know what the problems are.

The clerk to the committee has advised me that it is not expected that minority reports will be issued. I do not want to start that debate until we have started to take our work forward.

Are we agreed on the way that the reporters will take work forward?

Ms MacDonald: Provided that we can revisit the matter, if we want to.

Members indicated agreement.

Scrutiny

The Convener: The clerk has helpfully structured the documents in a different way. They have been broken down into different aspects of European Union work: the communities pillar; common foreign and security policy; and policing and judicial co-operation. Within each, the clerks have attempted to consider the most contentious areas at the beginning and the least contentious ones at the end. That will, I hope, focus our attention and streamline our work.

Most of our work will focus on the communities pillar rather than the others, but there will be issues from time to time on foreign and security policy and policing and judicial work.

Dennis Canavan: Has the clerk received, or is he likely to receive, any documentation relating to the lifting of the EU arms embargo on Indonesia? As I mentioned to you briefly before the meeting, there is concern from some non-governmental organisations such as Oxfam about some of the activities of the Indonesian army in West Timor. I would like that to be on the agenda at a future meeting.

The Convener: I will stop you there, Dennis, because that is not on the agenda for this meeting. You are being somewhat mischievous. As we agreed before the meeting, Stephen Imrie will liaise with your researcher to find out what the proposed timetable is. If there is a legitimate issue for us to consider, we will put it on our agenda at the earliest opportunity, but it is not on the agenda for this meeting.

Dennis Canavan: I am simply asking whether any documentation is likely to be received. That is something that we would normally be informed about.

The Convener: That is not on the agenda. This item is not an opportunity for members to start fishing expeditions and to ask whether they have received this or that document. Our task is very specific. The matter that you raise has not been included on the agenda. Before the meeting started, I came to an agreement with you on how we would deal with it, and that is how it will be taken forward. What we have before us are the documents with which members have been issued.

For document SP 544 (EC Ref No 12664/99, SEC(99) 1795), the recommendation is for routine scrutiny and referral to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee.

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For the following documents, the recommendation is to defer consideration and request more information via a draft letter from the convener to the Scottish Executive:

SP 470 (EC Ref No 12031/99, COM(99) 486 final)

SP 484 (EC Ref No 12030/99, COM(99) 487 final)

SP 498 (EC Ref No 12347/99, COM(99) 541 final)

SP 503 (EC Ref No 12350/99, COM(99) 551 final)

If the recommendation is accepted, those letters will be issued as soon as possible. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For the following documents, the recommendation is to await the explanatory memorandum, request a Scottish cover note and defer consideration until our next meeting:

SP 556 (EC Ref No 12992/99, COM(99) 576)

SP 572 (EC Ref No 13274/99, COM(99) 517)

SP 603 (EC Ref No 13670/99, COM(99) 636)

SP 605 (EC Ref No 13617/99, COM(99) 631 final)

SP 349 (EC Ref No 10251/99, SEC(99) 1213)

Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For document SP 604 (EC Ref No 13598/99, COM(99) 543), the recommendation is to defer consideration. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For document SP 543 (EC Ref No 12328/99, AGRI ENV 368), the recommendation is no further action, but to send a copy to the Rural Affairs Committee for its interest.

Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For document SP 548 (EC Ref No 12836/99, COM(99) 569), the recommendation is no further action, but to send a copy to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee for its interest. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For document SP 579 (EC Ref No 13508/99, COM(99) 596), the recommendation is for no further action, but to send a copy to the Transport and the Environment Committee for its interest. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For document SP 581 (EC Ref No 13404/99, COM(99) 587 final) the recommendation is for no further action, but to send a copy to the Health and Community Care Committee for its interest. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For documents SP 588 (EC Ref No 13712/99, SEC(99) 1971 COD 98/0289) and SP 594 (EC Ref No 13558/99, COM(99) 557 COD 99/0233) the recommendation is for no further action, but to send a copy to the Health and Community Care Committee for its interest. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For document SP 607 (EC Ref No PE-CONS 3626/99, EDUC 83 SOC 405 JEUN 67 CODEC 685), the recommendation is for no further action, but to send a copy to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee for its interest. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: For documents SP 468 (EC Ref No 12373/99, COM(99) 456 final) and SP 482 (EC Ref No 12673 12936/99, COM(99) 574) the recommendation is for no further action, but for the convener to send a letter to the Scottish Executive asking for further clarification to the Scottish cover note. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The committee recommended that no further action be taken on the following documents:

SP 524 (EC Ref No 13315/99, COM(99) 610)

SP 525 (EC Ref No COM(99) 623)

SP 511 (EC Ref No 12349/99, COM(99) 552 final)

SP 560 (EC Ref No 12935/99, COM(99) 574)

SP 417 (EC Ref No 11492/99, COM(99) 425)

final)

SP 481 (EC Ref No 12585/99, DROIPEN 18)

SP 495 (EC Ref No 12458/99, COM(99) 544 final)

SP 507 (EC Ref No 12656/99)

SP 513 (EC Ref No 12795/99, COM(99) 547 final)

SP 514 (EC Ref No 13052/99, EURODAC 22)

SP 542 (EC Ref No PE-CONS 3625/99, ECO 357 CODEC 643)

SP 546 (EC Ref No 12841/99, COM(99) 540)

SP 550 (EC Ref No 12677/99, COM(99) 570)

SP 551 (EC Ref No 12694/99, COM(99) 578 99/0232 (CNS))

SP 552 (EC Ref No 12839/99, COM(99) 539)

SP 553 (EC Ref No 12838/99, COM(99) 537)

SP 554 (EC Ref No 12896/99, COM(99) 571)

SP 555 (EC Ref No 12959/99, COM(99) 560)

SP 557 (EC Ref No 13012/99, COM(99) 568)

SP 558 (EC Ref No 13046/99, COM(99) 575)

SP 559 (EC Ref No 12823/99, COM(99) 580)

SP 561 (EC Ref No 13048/99, COM(99) 582 final)

SP 562 (EC Ref No 13231/99, COM(99) 609 final)

SP 563 (EC Ref No 13261/99, COM(99) 585)

SP 564 (EC Ref No 13264/99, COM(99) 588)

SP 565 (EC Ref No 13267/99, COM(99) 589)

SP 566 (EC Ref No 13273/99, COM(99) 591)

SP 567 (EC Ref No 13297/99, COM(99) 546)

SP 568 (EC Ref No 12499/99, SEC(99) 1730)

SP 569 (EC Ref No 12840/99, COM(99) 538)

SP 570 (EC Ref No 13284/99, SEC(99) 1809)

SP 571 (EC Ref No 13180/99, COM(99) 612)

SP 573 (EC Ref No 13303/99, COM(99) 598 final)

SP 574 (EC Ref No 13305/99, COM(99) 630 final)

SP 575 (EC Ref No 13308/99, COM(99) 577 COD 99/0238)

SP 576 (EC Ref No 13310/99, COM(99) 542)

SP 577 (EC Ref No 13319/99, COM(99) 595)

SP 578 (EC Ref No 13396/99 COM(99) 607)

SP 580 (EC Ref No 13528/99, COM(99) 599 final)

SP 582 (EC Ref No 12577/99, BUDGET 20)

SP 583 (EC Ref No 13313/99)

SP 584 (EC Ref No 13215/99, COM(99) 491)

SP 585 (EC Ref No 13493/99)

SP 587 (EC Ref No COM(99) 651)

SP 589 (EC Ref No 13623/99, COM(9) 484)

SP 590 (EC Ref No 13695/99, COM(99) 646)

SP 591 (EC Ref No 13696/99, COM(99) 647)

SP 592 (EC Ref No 13571/99, COM(99) 601)

SP 593 (EC Ref No 13580/99, COM(99) 62)

SP 595 (EC Ref No 13570/99, COM(99) 600 final)

SP 596 (EC Ref No 13537/99, COM(99) 567)

SP 599

SP 600 (EC Ref No COM(99) 644)

SP 601 (EC Ref No 13729/99, COM(99) 635)

SP 606 (EC Ref No 13275/99, COM(99) 562)

SP 609

SP 597 (EC Ref No 13523/99, REV 2 PESC 434 COEST 29 NIS 127)

SP 598 (EC Ref No 13619/99, REV 1 PESC 445 COSEC 52)

SP 602 (EC Ref No 14065/99, PESC 476 COWEB 166)

SP 610 (EC Ref No 13646/99, PESC 450 COWEB 155)

SP 545 (EC Ref No 12555/99, REV 2 CORDROGUE 64)

SP 547 (EC Ref No 13451/99, COPEN 60)

SP 549 (EC Ref No 13109/99, EUROPOL 47)

SP 608 (EC Ref No 2530-50)

Dr Sylvia Jackson: Some of those documents are relevant to reporters' forward plans. I believe that Stephen Imrie has copies of all the documents. Could we submit a list of relevant documents to him, so that we can have sight of them?

Stephen Imrie: I hold a master copy of all the EC documents. Copies can be made available to any member who wishes them. As is indicated in every day's business bulletin, the Parliament's reference centre also holds a master set of documents. Members can collect copies from there if they wish. However, I would be delighted if members were to approach me in the first instance.

Convener's Report

The Convener: A document has been circulated to members on the work programme of the Portuguese presidency. Are there any questions or comments on that?

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): I was in Brussels yesterday at a meeting of the Committee of the Regions' employment committee, where we were fortunate enough to have a presentation on the work programme of the Portuguese presidency. I was pleased to see how prominently employment features in the work programme. Stephen Imrie has picked that up in the briefing paper, which is very good.

Something else arose in the course of our discussion that might be of interest to the committee. At an earlier meeting, we discussed the national action plan on employment. A paper submitted yesterday to the Committee of the Regions made it clear that the European Council has advised that European regional and local authorities should have a role in scrutinising national employment plans. It might be useful for this committee to consider making that an agenda item for a future meeting, given that the input of local and regional authorities seems to be required.

The Convener: That is helpful. Stephen Imrie will discuss with Irene Oldfather whether there should be a report on that or whether it should be an agenda item.

The clerk has pointed out that we overlooked an item. The Rural Affairs Committee discussed and noted SP 377 (EC Ref No 11025/99 COM(99) 437 final) and the Transport and the Environment Committee discussed and noted SP 422 (EC Ref No 11156/99, SEC(99) 1302 final). It is recommended that we, too, note those documents, but the clerk suggests that we write for more information on SP 377.

Stephen Imrie: Following a discussion with colleagues, I want to draw members' attention to a matter on which they might wish to seek clarification from the Scottish Executive. SP 377 discusses a new tool—a vaccination programme—for controlling and containing infectious salmon anaemia. We could ask the Scottish Executive to seek clarification from the European Commission on the availability of Community financial assistance to offset the loss that has been suffered as a result of the implementation of Community measures.

The Convener: Is it agreed that we should seek clarification on that from the Scottish Executive?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Are there any comments on the European white paper on food safety? No.

Our next meeting is on 8 February.

Meeting closed at 14:41.

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