

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE

Tuesday 28 November 2000
(*Afternoon*)

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CONTENTS

Tuesday 28 November 2000

	Col.
ITEMS IN PRIVATE	863
CONVENER'S REPORT	864
SCRUTINY	864

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE **20th Meeting 2000, Session 1**

CONVENER

*Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West)
*Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab)
Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP)
*Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con)
*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
*Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Imrie

ASSISTANT CLERK

David Simpson

LOCATION

The Hub

Scottish Parliament

European Committee

Tuesday 28 November 2000

(Afternoon)

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

The Convener (Hugh Henry): Welcome to the 20th meeting in 2000 of the European Committee. I have received apologies from Richard Lochhead and Margo MacDonald. Sylvia Jackson may arrive later. A number of other members are not present, but we have not yet received apologies from them.

Items in Private

The Convener: Before we move to the main part of our agenda, I ask members to agree to take items 4 and 5 in private.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Would it be all right if Christine Boch and Adèle Brown, who assisted me greatly in drafting my paper, are present when we discuss it?

The Convener: Normally I would not agree to that request. However, because of the circumstances—the fact that the committee has not had the opportunity fully to discuss the paper, which deals with a number of technical issues—it would be useful for Christine Boch and Adèle Brown to be present.

Dennis Canavan: Thank you.

The Convener: Do we agree to take items 4 and 5 in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Convener's Report

The Convener: The next item on our agenda is the convener's report. Three recommendations have been circulated. The first relates to arrangements for the visit to the committee by the Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs. The clerks have been in touch with the minister's officials and an appointment has been made in his diary for 2 o'clock on 12 December. Before the meeting we will try to produce an issues paper. At the moment, I ask members simply to note the arrangements that have been made. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The second recommendation relates to the use of powers under section 57 of the Scotland Act 1998. Members will recall that we wrote to the minister asking to be notified formally of activities that involve the use of those powers. We have received what I regard as a positive reply from the Executive. I ask members to note the contents of the letter and to agree that the clerk to the committee should discuss the issue with Executive officials and produce a paper for our consideration, indicating suggested solutions. Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The third recommendation relates to the forthcoming fisheries council meeting. As members will recall, we decided to invite Rhona Brankin to appear before the committee to discuss that. At that point, we were unaware that a parliamentary debate on the fisheries council had been scheduled for 7 December. After discussion with the deputy convener, I decided that the committee should rescind its invitation to the minister. We feel that there is an opportunity for a wider debate in Parliament on 7 December, at which the same points could be made. However, it is important to establish the principle that the committee reserves the right, where appropriate, to have ministers appear before it ahead of council meetings.

I do not know how we can do this, but we need to find out about forthcoming business, although given that sometimes it is decided only a fortnight in advance, that might cause the clerks some problems. Do members accept the recommendation?

Members indicated agreement.

Scrutiny

The Convener: Before we proceed with the scrutiny of documents, I have two announcements to make. First, document SP 1373 was omitted from the minutes of our previous meeting. For the record, it was copied to the Transport and the Environment Committee.

Secondly, members will see that their papers include a public document entitled, "Correspondence Report: exchange of letters with the Scottish Executive on proposals for EC/EU legislation". We are trying to inform committee members of the letters that we are sending to the Executive on their behalf. We will publish such letters as that happens, and we will publish the replies that we receive. I hope that that will contribute to transparency in the Executive's handling of European matters.

We will now consider the sift recommendation note. Page 1 of the note recommends priority scrutiny for the following two documents:

SP 1531 (EC Ref No 12498/00 COM(2000) 651 final)

SP 1402 (EC Ref No 11265/00 COM(2000) 503 final).

Are there any questions or comments?

Stephen Imrie (Clerk): I have a minor comment. Priority scrutiny is recommended for these documents because they are both highly relevant to the forthcoming common fisheries policy inquiry. Subject to what the committee agrees later in today's meeting, the documents could be part of the general analysis that we would conduct on the CFP.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Do we know which fish are meant by the phrase "highly migratory fish"? Do they include salmon? Do we have any details?

Stephen Imrie: I am not aware of the details, but I will obtain the information for the member.

The Convener: Is that recommendation agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Do we agree, as page 2 states, that there are no documents to refer formally to other committees of the Parliament?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Page 3 of the recommendation note concerns documents on which we still await some information. The suggestion is that consideration of the following documents be deferred:

SP 1406 (EC Ref No 10802/00 COM(2000) 347 final), COD2000/0158, COD2000/0159)

SP 1586 (EC Ref No 12646/00 COM(2000) 573 final)

SP 1523 (EC Ref No COM(2000) 545 final)

SP 1550 (EC Ref No 12349/00 COM(2000) 631 final)

SP 1582 (EC Ref No 12648/00 COM(2000) 574 final)

SP 1434 (EC Ref No 11305/00 DROIPEN 39)

SP 1451 (EC Ref No 11547/00 COM(2000) 592 final)

SP 1454 (EC Ref No 11840/00 COM(2000) 547 final)

SP 1514 (EC Ref No 12074/00 COM(2000) 619 final)

Stephen Imrie: There is one minor matter for the committee's attention on document SP 1406, which relates to two proposals for directives on the handling of waste electrical and electronic equipment. We have just received some information on those directives from the Scottish Executive, which may interest the committee.

The Convener: Has that been circulated?

Stephen Imrie: The information was not circulated before the meeting, as it has just come to our attention. We are more than happy to circulate the documentation that we have received. The subject is relevant to the semiconductor industry, which is one of Scotland's major industries, primarily in the central belt. Catherine Stihler MEP pointed out the document to the committee at a previous meeting and told us that the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy was dealing with the subject. If the committee is so minded, we could take soundings from industry and environmental groups on their concerns about the document. We could bring those concerns back to the committee to enable it to have a more useful interaction with the European Parliament's committee.

A general matter that was raised for the committee's consideration was whether the committee was minded to recommend that the Transport and the Environment Committee should be made aware of the implementation of the environmental directives on waste, as a matter of its interest. It is arguable that the UK has a less than exemplary record of implementing such directives. If the committee is so minded, we could make the Transport and the Environment Committee aware of the document.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): One of my constituents and members of some of the trade unions in the industry have brought the proposals on waste electrical and electronic equipment to my attention recently. It would be useful for us to take some soundings from the unions, because we might want to comment on the proposals.

The Convener: Do we agree to that course of action? Shall we obtain information as Cathy Jamieson suggested, consider obtaining further

information from the industry and decide which items should be referred to the Transport and the Environment Committee?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: The recommendation on page 4 of the note is that no further action should be taken, other than copying the documents to the relevant committees for their information. The documents involved are:

SP 1571 (EC Ref No 12251/00 COM(2000) 615 final)
 SP 1551 (EC Ref No 12296/00 COM(2000) 625 final)
 SP 1559 (EC Ref No 12091/00 COM(2000) 546 final)
 SP 1490 (EC Ref No 11666/00 SEC(2000) 1564)
 SP 1435 (EC Ref No 10776/00 COM(2000) 7 final)
 SP 1491 (EC Ref No 11667/00 COM(2000) 567 final)
 SP 1509 (EC Ref No 12189/00 SOC 333)

Is that agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: It is recommended that no further action be taken on the following documents, which are listed on pages 5 to 10 of the note:

SP 1524 (EC Ref No 11123/00 COM(2000) 624 final 1999/0258 (CNS))
 SP 1526 (EC Ref No 11855/00)
 SP 1527 (EC Ref No 11605/00)
 SP 1530 (EC Ref No 12400/00)
 SP 1533 (EC Ref No 12363/00 COM(2000) 640 final)
 SP 1537 (EC Ref No Brussels 18/10/00 COM(2000) 653 final)
 SP 1541 (EC Ref No 12370/00)
 SP 1547 (EC Ref No 12175/00 COM(2000) 648 final)
 SP 1553 (EC Ref No 121348/00 COM(2000) 420 final)
 SP 1554 (EC Ref No 12200/00 COM(2000) 623 final)
 SP 1555 (EC Ref No 12213/00 COM(2000) 597 final)
 SP 1556 (EC Ref No 12214/00 COM(2000) 612 final)
 SP 1560 (EC Ref No 12248/00 COM(2000) 614 final)
 SP 1562 (EC Ref No 12318/00 COM(2000) 630 final)
 SP 1565 (EC Ref No 12267/00 COM(2000) 621 final)
 SP 1566 (EC Ref No 12191/00 COM(2000) 628 final 2000/0111(CNS) 2000/0112(CNS))
 SP 1568 (EC Ref No 12321/00 COM(2000) 626 final)
 SP 1570 (EC Ref No 12083/00 COM(2000) 611 final)
 SP 1573 (EC Ref No 12569/00 COM(2000) 658 final)
 SP 1575 (EC Ref No 12633/00 COM(2000) 659 final)
 SP 1580 (EC Ref No SEC(2000) 1557 final)
 SP 1581 (EC Ref No SEC(2000) 1561 final)
 SP 1584 (EC Ref No 11037/2/00 REV 2)

SP 1587 (EC Ref No 12665/00 SEC(2000) 1715 final)

SP 1588 (EC Ref No DS 926/00 ELARG/234/00)

SP 1597 (EC Ref No 12770/00 COM(2000) 660 final CNS 1993/0463)

SP 1598 (EC Ref No 12025/00)

SP 1599 (EC Ref No 12026/00)

SP 1338 (EC Ref No 10802/00 COM(2000) 347 final COD 2000/0158, COD 2000/0159)

SP 1528 (EC Ref No 12524/00 COM(2000) 656 final CNS 2000/263)

SP 1529 (EC Ref No 12514/00 COM(2000) 646 final)

SP 1532 (EC Ref No 12528/00 COM(2000) 618 final)

SP 1534 (EC Ref No 12362/00 COM(2000) 641 final)

SP 1535 (EC Ref No 12087/00 COM(2000) 604 final)

SP 1536 (EC Ref No 12525/00 COM(2000) 655 final CNS 2000/264)

SP 1538 (EC Ref No 11010/00)

SP 1539 (EC Ref No 12365/00 COM(2000) 652 final)

SP 1540 (EC Ref No 12719/00)

SP 1542 (EC Ref No 12490/00 COM(2000) 642 final)

SP 1543 (EC Ref No 12463/00 COM(2000) 639 final COD 2000/0262)

SP 1544 (EC Ref No 12295/00 COM(2000) 466 final)

SP 1545 (EC Ref No 12078/00 COM(2000) 633 final)

SP 1546 (EC Ref No 12405/00 COM(2000) 637 final)

SP 1548 (EC Ref No 12356/00 COM(2000) 632 final)

SP 1549 (EC Ref No 12433/00 COM(2000) 638 final)

SP 1552 (EC Ref No 11695/00 COM(2000) 587 final)

SP 1557 (EC Ref No 12335/00 COM(2000) 561 final)

SP 1558 (EC Ref No 12353/00 COM(2000) 616 final 2000/0247 (ACC))

SP 1561 (EC Ref No 12260/00 COM(2000) 598 final)

SP 1563 (EC Ref No 11698/00 COM(2000) 586 final)

SP 1564 (EC Ref No 12250/00 COM(2000) 613 final)

SP 1567 (EC Ref No 11674/00 COM(2000) 609 final)

SP 1569 (EC Ref No 11489/00 COM(2000) 599 final)

SP 1572 (EC Ref No 12484/00 COM(2000) 647 final)

SP 1574 (EC Ref No 12598/00 COM(2000) 461 final 2000/0203 (CNS))

SP 1576 (EC Ref No 12673/00 COM(2000) 668 final)

SP 1577 (EC Ref No 12674/00 COM(2000) 669 final)

SP 1578 (EC Ref No 12731/00 COM(2000) 661 final 2000/0270 (CNS))

SP 1579 (EC Ref No 12556/00 COM(2000) 636 final)

SP 1583 (EC Ref No COM(2000) 622 final)

SP 1585 (EC Ref No 12732/00 COM(2000) 676 final)

SP 1589 (EC Ref No 12670/00 COM(2000) 665 final)

SP 1590 (EC Ref No 12671/00 COM(2000) 666 final)

SP 1591 (EC Ref No 12672/00 COM(2000) 667 final)
SP 1592 (EC Ref No 12675/00 COM(2000) 671 final)
SP 1593 (EC Ref No 12676/00 COM(2000) 672 final)
SP 1594 (EC Ref No 12677/00 COM(2000) 673 final)
SP 1595 (EC Ref No 12678/00 COM(2000) 675 final)
SP 1596 (EC Ref No 12679/00 COM(2000) 677 final)
SP 1525 (EC Ref No 12241/00)
SP 1600 (EC Ref No 10387/2/00 REV 2)
SP 1489 (EC Ref No SN 3383/00)
SP 1501 (EC Ref No 9737/2/00 REV 2)
SP 1503 (EC Ref No 11344/2/00 REV 2)
SP 1504 (EC Ref No 11808/00)
SP 1493 (EC Ref No 11788/00 SEC(2000) 1531)
SP 1492 (EC Ref No 9737/3/00 REV 3)

Is that agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We will take the next item in private.

14:14

Meeting continued in private until 15:38.

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