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EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 2 November 2010

Session 3

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EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
13th Meeting 2010, Session 3

CONVENER

*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
*Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD)
Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
*Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con)
Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)
Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Professor Michael Keating (University of Aberdeen)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lynn Tullis
Simon Watkins

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

European and External Relations Committee

Tuesday 2 November 2010

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 11:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Irene Oldfather): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 13th meeting in 2010 of the European and External Relations Committee. I have received apologies from Jamie Hepburn, Jim Hume and Frank McAveety.

The first item on the agenda is to ask whether the committee is willing to take items 6 and 7 in private. Do members agree to that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Thank you. The next item is to decide whether to receive in private before our next meeting a briefing from the Scottish Parliament information centre on Scotland's North American activities. Do members agree to that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Thank you. That will allow us to take forward our questioning at the next meeting.

International Engagement Inquiry

11:01

The Convener: Item 3 is our international engagement inquiry. We are pleased to have with us Professor Michael Keating, who is a professor of politics at the University of Aberdeen. Welcome to the committee, Professor Keating, and thank you for the written work that you have undertaken for us.

Members will recall that we commissioned Professor Keating to undertake a comparative analysis of regions' international policies, which will enable us to measure those against the Scottish Government's strategy. We have a copy of Professor Keating's findings. I understand that he will make a short introductory statement, so I hand over to him.

Professor Michael Keating (University of Aberdeen): I was asked to look at the international engagement of some of Scotland's comparator regions and nations. I took Quebec, Flanders, Bavaria, Catalonia and the Basque Country. The reasons for those choices are that they have active external engagement programmes, that they are comparable to Scotland in various ways, and that they have a variety of constitutional arrangements, which means that we can see the differences that different institutions make.

My general finding is that those sub-state Governments have become increasingly active in international affairs in recent years. That is part of a general trend in which diplomacy is changing from old-fashioned, foreign-office dominated diplomacy that is concerned with security and high politics towards a more broad conception of diplomacy that involves economic, cultural, environmental and other matters. Foreign policy generally is no longer dominated by foreign offices but belongs to other departments as well, notably economic departments. We are seeing a shift in the geographical focus of diplomacy, and in the scale of focus, in that sub-state Governments are increasingly involved in external activities.

I suggest in my report a number of reasons for that change; probably the most important ones are purely functional. The sub-state Governments believe that their internal competences cannot be dealt with purely at home and that there is an external dimension to just about everything that they do. That is particularly true in economic development matters because of economic globalisation. Matters of trade, investment, technology and innovation cannot simply be seen as domestic matters, because they have an external impact. In the report, I go on to list a

number of other matters that are increasingly internationalised, such as environmental policy.

The second set of reasons are political; they are about institution building and consolidating the territories as Governments in their own right. That might be to do with nation building or region building, depending on the political complexion of the party that is in power, but they are all concerned with establishing themselves as something more than just administrative units within unitary nation states.

The third category of reasons is to do with good practice and what I call ethical issues. In a whole range of issues, sub-state Governments are trying to show that they are good global citizens who set a good example in practices to do with human rights, overseas development and so on. There has been a tendency for those activities to increase, but at the same time there has been a great deal of learning in the past 10 or 15 years.

Initially, many Governments engaged in something of a scattergun approach whereby they signed agreements with everybody and launched strategies that were not necessarily well followed through. There was a problem with linking external activities to what was going on at home. In recent years, all the Governments have reviewed their activities, sometimes very recently, and two of them—Bavaria and the Basque Country—are in the course of doing so. They are doing that with a view to achieving better focus, geographically and sectorally; better use of resources; and a clearer idea of exactly what external policy is for.

The Governments have also reviewed their representation abroad. All of them have offices abroad, which have a variety of functions, but the tendency now seems to be for the emergence of two types of office. One is an office of general representation, of which there are fairly few located in strategic countries, and the second is an office that is part of a much wider network of economic development and cultural offices.

Relations with the state Governments depend on a variety of factors. Of course, party politics makes a big difference, as do the motives of the Governments at the two levels. However, generally speaking, there has been a tendency for relations to improve as states accept the legitimacy of sub-state Governments going abroad and as sub-state Governments recognise the need to work with their host states. Roles and relationships are clarifying and settling down, and there is probably less conflict than there was 10 years or so ago.

The Convener: Thank you. I will start the questions with a general one. Have all the comparator regions that you looked at set out key strategic frameworks in the form of written documents, or is it more ad hoc than that? Is it a little bit of a pick and mix or does each comparator region have key strategic documents on international policies?

Professor Keating: They all have such documents. Some of them are fairly recent, but the document in Quebec goes back a long way, although it is updated every four or five years. The Catalan Government produced one in, I think, 2008, and the Flemish Government has just published one. The Basque Government is working on one at the moment. It had such a document five years ago, but the party in power changed and it is now working on another one. Bavaria is working on one. So, the answer to the question is yes.

The Convener: Is the review process that is on-going in Bavaria and the Basque Country to do with politics and the change in political parties, is it about finances, or is it more strategic and focused than that?

Professor Keating: In the Basque Country, the nationalists lost office and a socialist Government came in that symbolically changed the direction of policy away from nation building. It considered that what the previous Government had done was overextensive and that it had not spent money correctly. That is, of course, a matter of political judgment. In Bavaria, there is no particular political dimension; it is a matter of trying to work out how to do things. The same is true of the review in Flanders. However, even in the Basque Country, where there is a strong political dimension, there is a concern with focusing on particular sectors and regions, which is common to all the cases.

The Convener: In your opening remarks, you mentioned general representation and a wider economic development and cultural network. That mirrors Scotland's position, because we tend to do both. Do the comparator regions allocate budgets to that kind of international engagement? You put figures in your paper on the numbers of people on the ground, but have you come across budget allocations and are they similar to the set-up that we have in Scotland?

Professor Keating: That is difficult because, as you know, budget figures are very slippery things. They look hard and concrete, but it depends on what you count. I thought of trying to include estimates for budgetary spending, but I realised that that would be meaningless, because it depends on what you count. A ministry of economic development or of the environment might be doing international work, but that would not be in the budget.

In Quebec and Flanders, there is a separate ministry of international affairs, but that may not cover everything. We do not have such figures,

and no one has tried to estimate them, because everyone is aware of the fact that they are not terribly meaningful. However, we can say that Quebec and Flanders spend much more than the others.

One reason for the higher expenditure in Flanders is the region's extensive external competences. Flanders has exclusive external competence for matters such as foreign trade and tourism; central Government no longer has competence in those areas. It would be misleading to say that Flanders is focusing more on foreign policy, because that is its responsibility under the constitution. Quebec has an extremely extensive network of foreign representation that goes back to the 19th century, so that is an historic concern. Those are the two cases that really stand out; the other regions spend a great deal less on foreign activity.

The Convener: Of course, both of those regions are part of federal systems.

Professor Keating: Yes.

The Convener: Is it fair to say that the politics and constitutional settlement of a region have an impact on its international strategy?

Professor Keating: Yes.

The Convener: I have some more detailed questions, but my colleagues would like to come in. We will stick to general issues for the moment.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Good morning. Thank you for the comprehensive paper that you have produced. In your opening remarks and in the paper, you have explained why various regions get involved in external activity, which has an economic dimension. However, there is also a cultural aspect. You spoke about the promotion of specific economic virtues, but are there not also political and cultural reasons for getting involved in external activity? Given what you have said in your paper, should Scotland as a region be pushing forward in Europe not just on cultural issues but on the fact that, economically, we are the world leader on climate change and renewable energy?

Professor Keating: Indeed. In some cases, there is a distinct cultural element, because there is a language that provides a clear basis for activity. In the case of Quebec, it is a world language; in the cases of Catalonia and the Basque Country, they have their own languages, which receive a huge amount of resources.

You have identified another important issue, which is the way in which culture and economic development come together. Many regions emphasise that because current theories of economic development say that, to a great extent, it is about social capital, innovation and entrepreneurship, which are cultural matters. Culture in the broader sense—the culture of enterprise or of a competitive economy—is important and may be linked in important ways to culture in the narrow sense. Flanders has put huge emphasis on the use of culture as a form of social mobilisation for economic development, social solidarity and so on.

Many regions have taken up issues such as climate change and have sought to be world leaders on them. Climate change is a big issue everywhere. Regions are trying both to set an example on climate change and to show that there is a need to adapt to it by restructuring their economies and making climate change not just a burden but an opportunity.

Sandra White: Scotland is focusing on climate change, and other regions are getting together to tackle issues that are of concern to them. To what extent are regions acting collectively? I note from your paper that a number of regions are speaking to one another and are pushing forward issues that are of relevance to them, with support from other regions.

There is geographical scope for activity not just within the regions but in countries outwith Europe with which they wish to trade. For example, the Scottish Government has a China plan. How do other regions go about picking the countries with which they want to work? How do they establish links with Brazil, Russia, India and China—the BRIC countries?

11:15

Professor Keating: Initially, regions tried to establish links with anybody that happened to pass through. Then they realised that they had to become much more selective. The more successful initiatives are with other countries and regions that have complementary strengths. Regions tend not to have links with other regions that have exactly the same thing, because they are competing in the same markets. Where there is complementarity, there is a possibility of developing linkages, and they can take a number of forms. They can be to do with inward investment, markets, or collaboration in research and development and learning, which are particularly important in areas such as renewable energy.

Gradually, regions are finding the right partners, and they are being much more selective about who they will co-operate with as they try to bring sectoral and geographical priorities together. They will go to a particular country because it has a sector that is of interest.

Everybody is getting into the emerging economies—the so-called BRICs. Everybody is talking about them, at least—although I am not yet

convinced that people have a strategic view about exactly what to do in those countries. It has almost become a slogan, like "going abroad" was in the past, simply because those countries are viewed as being the economies of the future.

Some of those markets are extremely difficult to get into, particularly Russia, which is a very dangerous and, frankly, a pretty corrupt place. I was struck by how the Quebec people told me that, when they go to Russia or India, they go with the Canadian Government, because they need a lot of diplomatic cover. When they go to Brazil or China, however, it is okay.

It is difficult to know who to collaborate with in such places. Should it be with firms, with regions or with the country? Increasingly, there is a search for regional partners in those places. It depends on where people go. In Brazil, there has been a certain amount of decentralisation. It is a federation, but it used to be very centralised. Now, there is a certain amount of protagonism on the part of the regions, so there are partners there.

In Russia, the situation is exactly the opposite. Many Russian regions were engaged in outward power diplomacy activities until Putin recentralised the system. It is now very difficult to find interlocutors in Russia below the level of the central state.

Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): I wish first to follow up on one of Sandra White's points, about climate change. Were any of the nations that are being discussed represented at the recent Copenhagen climate change conference?

Professor Keating: Quebec was represented there, because in recent years it managed to negotiate a position within the Canadian constitution whereby provinces can be represented in international negotiations that affect their competences, as the Copenhagen summit did. The Quebec people were there as part of the Canadian delegation. It was a non-nationalist Quebec Government—the politics might have been different had the Parti Québécois been in power. Canada has changed in recent years, and it has become more accommodating of the position of provinces in general. Not all provinces come to every such event—Quebec tends to be represented rather more than the others.

Catalonia was not represented, and the people from there were very annoyed—they wanted to be there. They did not have a place within the Spanish delegation.

Bill Wilson: I want to jump a bit further back, to your comments on Flanders. On issues such as fishing negotiations, would Flanders lead where Flemish fisheries and vessels are involved?

Professor Keating: The only fishing in Belgium is off Flanders, so it is Flemish policy. Flanders does the whole lot.

Bill Wilson: It does all the negotiations, does it?

Professor Keating: Yes.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Good morning, Professor. I will pick up on a couple of points that Sandra White has already explored with you. The first one goes back to the BRIC grouping of countries. Is it not a little bit arrogant for countries the size of Scotland, with 5 million people, to be talking gaily about external relations with countries such as China, India or Russia? It is like a mouse trying to become involved romantically with an elephant. Should not we be aiming our efforts at the regions, and at comparable areas—and cities the size of Glasgow, rather than those the size of Beijing, Shanghai or Mumbai?

Professor Keating: My report is not about giving a judgment on that, but I will say something about the practices of the places that I have been talking about. They all seek interlocutors of the right size in the right place. There is a political dimension in that nationalist Governments want to sign deals with states because that enhances their status, although that does not apply to China and Russia so much as to Latin America and smaller countries. However, when it comes to practical functional matters, all Governments of whatever complexion are looking for regional level interlocutors, and they exist in China.

The other week, I was at a meeting in Aberdeen at which somebody from a Norwegian region said that that region was the first in Europe to sign a partnership agreement with Guangdong. I said that they were the sixth person who had told me that. Everybody is scrambling there, and the Chinese are very open. I am not convinced that everybody has the right relationship or is talking to the right people. However, we know that the economic change must be explained at local and regional levels in places such as China, and that what has gone on in Beijing has very little to do with what is happening on the ground. There are enormous differences in the economies of different parts of China, and if you are concerned with investment, trade or technology, the central Government in Beijing is probably not the right place to go. That includes states as well. The people who actually make the decisions must be reached.

Ted Brocklebank: It would be interesting to hear examples of lessons that the comparator countries that we are considering can teach us. In what areas have those countries been a little bit smarter and quicker on their feet than we have been in Scotland?

Professor Keating: The secret of a lot of what we are talking about is having a certain amount of flexibility, learning where things do not work, and closing them down. That has been done in Quebec on several occasions. Things have simply been closed down because they have not proved to be useful or profitable.

It is important to open up to civil society rather than just regard such work as things that Governments do. Governments can sign agreements but firms, universities and research centres follow those agreements through. Catalonia and, to some extent, Quebec, have put a big emphasis on internationalising the country as a whole. Local governments are also involved. It is a matter of finding the proper partners at home, and getting them to take up and carry on agreements. Otherwise, an agreement will simply remain an agreement between politicians, with little follow-through.

Ted Brocklebank: Finally, are there examples of comparator countries having worked successfully with Scotland? I am thinking in particular about Catalonia and the Basque Country, for example. I have had chats with their representatives in Brussels about ways in which we can move forward on a common front. I cannot remember very much coming out of that, but perhaps you have been able to see in your studies evidence of where we have been in successful collaborations with our comparator associates.

Professor Keating: Again, I am not trying to be evasive, but I am not here to talk about or evaluate what Scotland has done. I could have done that, but it would have required me to talk to other people.

Ted Brocklebank: I accept that.

Professor Keating: However, the same lessons apply. Things have worked because people outside Government have taken them up and it has not been only the Government that has run with them. I know that many of the agreements that have been signed by Scotland—this precedes devolution—have simply been dead letters because nobody has followed them through. I know, too, that the agreements with Catalonia and Flanders have been quite active, and that there is talk about an agreement with the Basque Country following the First Minister's visit the other week. There is a political dimension to that. The criteria for choosing regions are sometimes economic and sometimes political. Catalonia and the Basque Country have an obvious political relevance, but some of the German Länder that were more involved in collaboration in the past had a more economic relevance. It depends on what the criteria are.

The Convener: In the section in your paper on problems, you say:

"There has not always been a linking of governmental efforts to those of civil society."

You said just now that, sometimes, external links work when those outside Government pick them up and run with them. Will you elaborate a little more on the

"linking of governmental efforts to those of civil society"?

Professor Keating: Yes. For example, Catalonia's strategy has always been to project Catalonia and not the Catalan Government. Jordi Pujol used to talk about that and say, "We have an external presence; we do not have a foreign policy." The Catalans talk about internationalising Catalonia, not just taking Catalonia abroad. The review that they had of their external policy, which concluded in 2008, included an elaborate process of discussion with civil society. That did not happen in the other cases, such as Quebec, where it is much more of a Government foreign policy or external policy.

The private sector is very involved in the Basque Country, too, and the universities are very involved in Catalonia and the Basque Country, because knowledge, innovation, research and development are international and they are doing a lot of that work. Initially, the universities are encouraged by Government to be involved, but then they must follow the policy through for themselves, and they need the resources to do that. In some areas of innovation, research and development, there have been some highly successful partnerships and some policy learning. However, that depends on taking the policy beyond Government to local government, the private sector and universities.

The Convener: That is interesting.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I was interested in the section in your paper on ethical fields of activity and the international development links of Flanders and the two Spanish regions. Are those links connected to empire and the ancient relationships across the world? If so, has a conscious decision been taken to work with countries in which they were previously involved in that way?

Professor Keating: Yes, a lot of historical tradition is involved. For the Spanish regions, Latin America is an important area. We cannot generalise about Latin America because it contains some wealthy countries that are starting to invest in Spain and some very poor ones that are the recipients of foreign aid. However, in both cases, there is an historical connection.

Flanders is not very involved in what used to be the Belgian empire, but it is involved in southern

Africa. That may have something to do with the linguistic affinities and the missionary tradition—there were a lot of Flemish missionaries in southern Africa.

History explains many of the links, but it is not the whole story because, once again, the regional Governments need to choose countries and projects with which they will work. There has been a lot of policy learning on overseas developments, too. On the one hand, the regional Governments—often working with the voluntary sector—are more effective at delivering small-scale projects than big national programmes. On the other hand, they cannot do it on their own; they need the diplomatic back-up and the state's protection. Therefore, we have increasingly seen a complementarity of the state, region and local efforts each doing the sorts of things that they are best at.

Patricia Ferguson: On another issue entirely, I noticed that Bavaria has 22 offices in other countries. The Basque Country certainly seems to have quite a few, as do Catalonia and Flanders. How successful are those offices? Are they symbolic, or do they have a real purpose? I realise that the answer will vary hugely between countries and offices, but is there a general feeling that they work, are value for money and pay for themselves?

11:30

Professor Keating: Again, a lot has been learned on that issue. At one time, Quebec established offices all over the place, without any clear rationale. It is interesting that, because they did not deliver much, many of them were closed in the 1990s by the nationalist Parti Québécois Government, which faced an economic crisis. The previous Basque Government established many offices and had plans to establish more. The succeeding Government closed many of those offices, partly for political reasons and partly because they were not considered to be value for money.

Catalonia has always worked much more closely with civil society and the private sector. It does not put in a huge amount of its own money, but it goes into partnership. Until fairly recently, its representation in Europe—Patronat Català Pro Europa in Brussels—was not a Government office. Now, that has been converted into Patronat Catalunya Món, which means the Catalan institute for the world, and a lot of activity goes through it. It involves business, universities and other people in partnership and is a bit like the Scotland Europa model rather than the Scottish Government model in Brussels. That model is different from the Quebec model, which is very much that of Government representation.

Much has been learned about where to focus activity. As is obvious, Quebec has a big presence in Paris. For economic reasons, it has a big presence in New York, rather than Washington, and in London. The issue is working out the economic and cultural priorities.

One trend is towards two levels of representation. Flanders has several levels of representation, but it is talking about adopting the Quebec model and having a clear hierarchy. In some places, Governments might have strong political, cultural or economic interests, so the presence there will be large. However, elsewhere just one person or one part-time person might be needed to direct people to the right area—for example, they will tell someone who wants to invest in Bavaria where to go to find out what is going on there.

The Bavarian model is different—most of Bavaria's offices are run by the chamber of commerce. The offices are partly funded by the Government, but they are run in close co-operation with the private sector. The concern is with investment and technology and not very much with political representation.

Patricia Ferguson: Do such offices ever piggyback on the national Government's efforts in other countries? Does a close working relationship exist, or are such offices deliberately located in different places?

Professor Keating: That depends on the politics. Quebec has collaborated much more in recent years. In areas where Quebec thinks that operating on its own is inappropriate, the Quebec delegation is housed in the Canadian embassy—that happens in the dangerous areas that I mentioned and in areas where Quebec does not feel that investing in having its own delegation would be worth while. Of course, that depends on who is in power at the two levels of Government and how well the system works.

Bavaria has a close relationship with the federal Government and not much conflict occurs. The Basque Country had a lot of conflict, but it has less now. Following the change of Government, a strategic decision was taken to co-operate with and work through the Spanish Government, although conflicts still arise—just because both Governments are of the same party, that does not mean that no conflicts arise.

The situation varies. In general, there is probably less conflict now than there was in the past. Whoever is in power tends to work out the appropriate roles and relationships and to realise that both levels have a place—they do not necessarily compete with each other, as they might have different tasks to do.

Bill Wilson: I will return to Patricia Ferguson's points about offices of the Iberian peninsula nations. It must be difficult to differentiate between the linguistic effect and the effect of the old imperial period on which countries are dealt with. However, I am left wondering whether any evidence shows a difference in behaviour or in approach between offices that are based in countries with a shared idiom and offices that are based in countries with which they do not have a shared idiom. For instance, do the Catalonian offices behave differently in Venezuela from how they do in China, assuming that they have an office in China?

Professor Keating: Yes, because there is often a closer cultural, linguistic and historical affinity. There are often diaspora populations, which means that there are ready-made networks of people that offices such as the Basque and Catalan offices in Latin America can deal with. There are also now a lot of immigrants from those countries, particularly in Catalonia and to some extent in the Basque Country, and that makes a huge difference.

In the case of Quebec, the Governments of France and Quebec have made a strategic decision to prioritise links with French-speaking countries, because that helps Canada to sustain the French language, which is a shared objective of the Governments.

Bill Wilson: Does that suggest that the offices are, pound for pound, more effective when they are based in countries with a shared idiom, or is that not necessarily the case?

Professor Keating: When the offices are concerned with cultural matters, one reason for their existence is the shared language. Not much of an attempt is made to promote the Catalan language outside of Latin America. There are Catalan cultural performances, of course, but the intensive sustaining of the language and culture is primarily done in Latin America.

However, when it is a matter of economics, although I would not say that a shared culture is irrelevant—in the case of the Basque Country, the diaspora and cultural networks also seem to be important to the business community—a distinction is made between the shared values that are important for the culture, and the economic dimension of paradiplomacy, which can be done with anyone.

The Convener: There is an interesting section in your submission on internationalisation at home. I am particularly keen on encouraging the learning of languages, and your paper mentions

"Catalonia and the Basque Country aiming for general fluency in at least three languages".

That is impressive. I imagine that in Quebec there is general fluency in at least two languages. What about Bavaria? Is there a pattern throughout the regions of promoting the idea of internationalisation at home? Is language learning a significant part of that?

Professor Keating: Yes, it is in all those cases. Of course, the United Kingdom is the outlier in the whole world because of our appalling record on language, which is getting worse, not better. It is generally accepted that English is necessary for everyone, because it is the international language, but people should also have another language. It is just normal for all university graduates in Bavaria to speak English, but it is important for them to have another language, such as an eastern European language. Similarly, in Flanders, fluency in English is the norm for graduates, but they need something else on top of that.

In the Spanish case, linguistic performance has not been as good historically, but there is a big emphasis on it in Catalonia and the Basque Country. In Catalonia, the majority of the population is bilingual in Catalan and Castilian; that is just taken as normal. Learning English plus another foreign language is not considered to be a terrible burden there.

In Quebec, the knowledge of other languages is not so good; it is much less impressive than it is in most European cases. There is not universal bilingualism and most people in Quebec do not speak English—even many university graduates will not speak English—but there is now an emphasis on learning it. There is a certain defensiveness because, of course, the English language is seen as the big challenge. That is the problem, which is why efforts have been made to sustain French. Now that people in Quebec have succeeded in sustaining French as their language, they are more relaxed about learning English. There is now a big emphasis on the learning of English, with the result that there seems to be much more bilingualism in Quebec than in the other Canadian provinces.

Sandra White: I have a follow-on question. Can the same be said of Catalonia, where the first language is Catalan and the second is Spanish? Are the Catalans becoming more comfortable with learning Spanish? I have been over to Catalonia on numerous occasions and people there seem to have difficulty moving from Catalan to Spanish.

Professor Keating: Catalan and Spanish are close enough together that it is not a big problem to switch between the two.

Sandra White: What about in education?

Professor Keating: In the educational system, the norm is to be taught in Catalan, but Spanish is obligatory—to graduate from high school and

university, students have to pass exams in Spanish. It is not such a big problem because the languages are close enough together.

It is more difficult in the Basque Country, where Basque is not spoken by a majority of the population and the languages are very different, but it seems to be the case that most children in the Basque Country are now brought up bilingually. That was not true of the older people but, increasingly, the children are learning bilingualism from a very early age. That makes it easier to acquire a third or a fourth language.

Bill Wilson: I was going to ask you about that. I believe that there is quite a bit of research in Catalonia about the ability of children to learn a third language if they have been brought up in Castilian and Catalan, but I think that you dealt with that in your comments about the Basque Country.

The Convener: Do colleagues have any other points that they want to raise?

Sandra White: I would like to ask what I thought was the million-dollar question. You mentioned that you have not studied Scotland. Are there any lessons that Scotland can learn from the research—[*Interruption*.] I am sorry—Ted Brocklebank says that he asked that question, but I did not hear the answer. Can we learn any lessons?

Professor Keating: I have been studying Scotland for 40 years, so I know quite a bit about it. However, as I did not do any such work in preparation for today's meeting, I am slightly reluctant to talk about such matters.

There are lessons that we can learn. There is a need for greater selectivity, for more strategic thinking and for external priorities to be linked with domestic priorities. Policy needs to be reviewed regularly so that we can see what is working. If something is not working, we should stop doing it. There is also a need for greater engagement, beyond the Government and Parliament, for society as a whole. As I mentioned, local government, the universities, businesses and the voluntary sector should be involved in the exercise.

Sandra White: I am sorry—you answered that; I must have been asleep.

The Convener: Just before we draw the session to a close, I note that you say at the very end of your paper:

"Bavaria is a leader of the group of Power Regions, which are drawn from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America."

I thought that that was interesting. Could you expand on that? I have not heard of the group of power regions.

Professor Keating: Neither had I. It is a rather pretentious title that does not even sound better in German.

The idea stems from Bavaria's strategic economic concerns, combined with the notion that Bavaria could promote itself as some kind of leader of the Europe of the regions movement taken to a global level. The group has regular meetings—I think that a plenary meeting is held every two years. It is a framework within which a number of programmes develop; it is not a blueprint for doing all sorts of things. As I understand it, there are a number of working groups within it, which involve the relevant regions, depending on whether the issue under discussion is climate change, renewable energy or technology, for example.

The experience of the people whom I talked to in Bavaria seemed quite positive. They seemed to think that they got enough out of it, precisely because they were not trying to get everything at the same time; they were just taking up opportunities where they came up and working at one thing at a time.

The group is perhaps less grand that it seems, but it is impressive in the sense that it provides an overall framework for specific initiatives, sometimes on specific local development projects.

11:45

The Convener: Another point that you made in relation to Bavaria was on the conflict that it faced—akin to the challenge that Scotland might face—in terms of being a modern country. You mentioned laptops and lederhosen. What line has Bavaria gone down and how successful has it been? Is it still trying to capitalise on both elements?

Professor Keating: It is. I have not heard that slogan for a while. It was too nice a slogan not to put in my report, but it is a little bit embarrassing if you think about it—it is not terribly impressive as a slogan. However, it captures the notion that Bavaria is using its history and culture as a vehicle for collective action, mobilisation and institution building, but it wants to be seen as very modern, too.

There are many parallels with Bavaria. In many places in Europe you will find that the symbols of the territory are taken not from the centre but from the periphery. The Alps for Bavaria are like the Highlands for us. That is where you take your cultural inspiration from, even though it is a

particular culture and not, historically, the culture of the whole country. That is a common theme.

Of course, people then start complaining that that is archaic, kitsch, Brigadoon stuff, that they do not like it and that they want a different image. In all the cases, people are arguing constantly about what image to present to the outside and how to combine tradition with a high-tech, modern image.

The Convener: That sounds familiar.

Bill Wilson: It was "laptop und lederhosen" that I was interested in, too, convener.

The Convener: I beat you to it, Bill.

Before I close this item, is there anything that you want to draw to our attention that we have not questioned you on? You have given us a fairly comprehensive report, which will be helpful.

Professor Keating: This is a learning process. What struck me in looking at the cases in the report as well as at Scotland is that they seem to be converging. They started off from very different places—many of them were just muddling through. They learned something from each other, but mostly they learned from experience and they have become much better at selecting priorities and using their resources than they were when I started looking at this issue 15 years ago, when there was a lot of muddling through and a lot of money was being wasted.

The Convener: Thank you for your evidence and your written report, which will be very informative in our international engagement inquiry. Thank you for coming today.

"Brussels Bulletin"

11:48

The Convener: We move to item 4. Ian Duncan is not with us today, but do colleagues wish to raise any points on the "Brussels Bulletin"?

Sandra White: I would like Ian Duncan to keep an eye on regional policy, which is mentioned on page 4 of the bulletin, which is about funding and making Europe more visible. That is an ideal issue for us.

The innovation union initiative is mentioned on page 11. I have mentioned the innovation partnerships before. Next year, the innovation partnership will be dedicated to healthy ageing. I would like to be kept updated on and informed about that.

The Convener: Those two points are worthy of note.

I draw to colleagues' attention the single market act, which is mentioned on page 10. Colleagues might recall that it was intended that the new Commission would produce a single market act and that the draft would be ready around September. In fact, Commissioner Barnier has indicated that he wishes to continue consultation on that over the next considerable number of months. The closing date for the consultation is 5 January. We had a briefing on that last time I was in Brussels. There are some important issues to consider. Some of the regions are calling for a further extension within the act to include some initiatives that had been put in place on a temporary basis as a result of the global downturn, some of which related to state aid and public procurement. Flexibility has been brought in around limits, which other regions have been asking to be extended.

As a result, I thought that there might be some quite important issues to consider. Given that we have until January, I wonder whether colleagues would be happy for us to ask Ian Duncan to bring a report to the committee outlining some of the key issues for Scotland. We might want to discuss that with other committees or to write a letter to the commissioner highlighting our views. In the past, we have taken a considerable amount of evidence from the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Scottish Government on issues to do with jobs, skills, public procurement and so on, so we have some evidence to hand.

Are colleagues happy for us to ask Ian Duncan to produce a paper on that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: As there are no other points, do we agree to note the bulletin and forward it to the relevant subject committees and other committees?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: That brings the public part of our meeting to a close.

11:51

Meeting continued in private until 12:09.

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