



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Thursday 15 May 2014

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EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
13th Meeting 2014, Session 4

CONVENER

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DEPUTY CONVENER

*Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP)

*Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)

*Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Clarissa Azkoul (International Organization for Migration)

Gary Christie (Scottish Refugee Council)

Sarah Craig (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network)

Peter Grady (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Professor Alison Phipps (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network)

Professor Robert Wright (University of Strathclyde)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Katy Orr

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

European and External Relations Committee

Thursday 15 May 2014

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:06]

Independence: Citizenship and Immigration

The Convener (Christina McKelvie): Good morning and welcome to the 13th meeting of 2014 of the European and External Relations Committee. I make the normal request that mobile phones be switched off. I also alert members and witnesses that some people are using iPads to access the white paper, and we are happy with that, but if you could switch off mobile phones, that would be helpful. Broadcasting do not like it otherwise, because it makes funny noises.

I have received apologies from Dave Moxham of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Due to a bereavement, he cannot attend this morning.

Item 1 is the Scottish Government's proposals for an independent Scotland, and we are looking at citizenship, asylum and immigration. We are using a round-table format this morning. I know most of the faces that I see around the table. You are all well used to this format, so catch my eye if you want to speak. I hope to allocate half an hour to each of the three separate topics today so that we give them a fair hearing, but that does not mean that you cannot add something if you want to. If you can say your name before you speak, that would be helpful for the official reporters.

We will go around the table and introduce ourselves. I am the committee's convener.

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): I am the deputy convener.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am a member for Central Scotland.

Peter Grady (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): I am from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Clarissa Azkoul (International Organization for Migration): I am from the International Organization for Migration.

Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): I am the MSP for Cowdenbeath.

Professor Alison Phipps (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network): I am from the

Glasgow refugee asylum and migration network at the University of Glasgow.

Sarah Craig (Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network): I, too, am from GRAMNet.

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): I am the MSP for North East Fife.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): I am the MSP for Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley.

Gary Christie (Scottish Refugee Council): I am from the Scottish Refugee Council.

Professor Robert Wright (University of Strathclyde): I am a professor of economics at the University of Strathclyde.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am an MSP for the Highlands and Islands.

The Convener: Thank you. I am going to open with a straightforward question this morning. The white paper proposes a specific way of looking at asylum and immigration, but we are looking at other countries to see what best practice we can glean from there. We thank the witnesses for coming along this morning because it helps to inform the committee's way forward.

What type of asylum, immigration and citizenship system would we have in an independent Scotland? Where are the best examples around the world for us to look at to see whether they would be appropriate for Scotland in the future?

Professor Phipps: There are several answers to the question about the best examples that have historical, cultural and legal parallels. The Republic of Ireland is an obvious example. It might be better to look at countries in which these have been troubled issues and to consider the lessons that have been learned from that.

I would think about looking at Germany, where questions of citizenship have been quite fraught and citizenship is often ethnically determined. That has been challenged over quite a long period, up to the present day. We should learn lessons from that approach and what it means for people who were not born to German parents, for example, and what it has meant for legislation on dual nationality—which in Germany is called *doppelte Staatsbürgerschaft*—and multiple nationality and how those issues have been decided. There are also important lessons to be learned from a country that has experienced many changes to its borders throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

Professor Wright: I back up what Alison Phipps said. There are many examples of good practice and many examples of not-so-good practice. Germany is a good example of what not

to do, whereas some good ideas have been adopted in Australia and Canada. One of those—the points-based system—has been built into the white paper.

Basically, there are two issues: how we select immigrants in the first place and what we do once they are here. There are two groups of immigrants: those whom we can control and those whom we cannot control. For example, if Scotland makes a smooth transition into the European Union and no transitional arrangements are imposed, people will be able to come unrestricted from other EU countries. For immigrants who come from outwith the EU, there will be a points-based system, the purpose of which will be to pick people with high skills and the right skills, and to attract entrepreneurial individuals who will create jobs or invest in the Scottish economy. The white paper has got that right, more or less, by adopting the points-based system that is used in places including Canada and Australia.

A decision will have to be made about what happens when people get here. Is there a desire for citizenship to be something that immigrants can achieve quickly? If there is, that would involve making the hurdles low, as is the case in Canada. Alternatively, there might be a desire to make it a complicated, expensive and time-consuming process, in which citizenship is a kind of prize. Different types of behaviour would result, depending on which system was chosen. As I understand it from reading between the lines of the white paper—this is not specifically stated in a clear way—the Scottish Government is leaning towards the former rather than the latter approach. The latter approach is the one that has been adopted in the current United Kingdom system; it is quite difficult to obtain UK citizenship.

Gary Christie: I agree with the two previous speakers. There is no single asylum system that we could look to as being the best. We could look at various aspects of asylum systems that have different functions in different areas, but it is not possible to identify one that is the best.

The approach that we have taken has been to consider the principles that we would like to be adopted for an asylum procedure in Scotland—regardless of whether Scotland becomes an independent country or remains part of the UK—and how those principles would translate into policy under each of the constitutional settlements. The options that we looked at for decision making on asylum were the Scottish Government devolving responsibility back to the Home Office and allowing it to make the decisions, the Scottish Government making those decisions under the guidance of the Home Office, the creation of a new body to deal with immigration and asylum, and the creation of a new body to deal solely with

asylum. That last is what we suggest should happen, so we were glad that that proposal appeared in the white paper. Equally, if Scotland does not become independent, we would like the handling of asylum to be devolved from the Home Office and a separate independent agency to be set up.

The Convener: An issue that I have picked up on over the past few years is that of how children are treated in the asylum system. Rather than their being dealt with in a formulaic way by an agency—such as what was the UK Border Agency and is now UK Visas and Immigration—I would like them to be dealt with by local social work or child protection teams, because those children have specific individual needs, regardless of whether they have been trafficked or have come here unaccompanied. Could we do more work in that area?

09:15

Gary Christie: We have a number of concerns about how adults and their children are treated in asylum and trafficking procedures. Most of those concerns would be addressed without necessarily needing a change of powers. In addition, better relationships are needed between the agencies that are involved.

The Home Office is under a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, but how it does that is often criticised. I return to the point about what principles we want the system to be based on, what expertise and policy we would have in place and who is best placed to deliver that—an immigration body or bodies that are more responsible for children's welfare, for example social workers, as the convener mentioned.

Hanzala Malik: I want to tease out the differences between current legislation and perceptions about that legislation. If there were differences, would that attract more refugees to Scotland? If so, how would the rest of the UK perceive that? Securing its borders would be a new challenge for it.

Gary Christie: If I understand correctly, you are asking about the numbers of refugees in an independent Scotland, should the people of Scotland vote yes. Numbers of forced migrants are very difficult to quantify. Four years ago, very few people would have thought that there would be 3 million Syrian refugees. Conflicts emerge, which leads to forced migrants.

On the numbers of refugees, we must consider that most asylum seekers in Scotland have been dispersed here from other parts of the UK. No definitive numbers exist on how many people arrive in Scotland and claim from Scotland asylum, either at port or in country.

The impact of independence is very difficult to judge. For example, in an independent Scotland, other things would happen, such as the potential for increased international flights. If the Scottish Government in an independent Scotland were part of the European Union and was using the European *acquis* on asylum, under the Dublin regulation if those seeking asylum have registered a claim in another European country, the Scottish Government could be in its rights to return them to that country.

A number of factors are at play. It is very difficult to say what the numbers would be, but I do not believe that they would be extremely high.

Hanzala Malik: It is not the numbers but the policy that I am interested in. I accept that it is incredibly difficult to assess the variables, given that there are many different aspects. I am trying to assess the fact that no European country has the same immigration policy. That is an issue. I am trying to establish how, if Scottish immigration law were perceived as being softer than the law in the rest of the UK, the UK would deal with any increased immigrant population. What challenges would both Governments face? At the end of the day, the UK Government would expect a level of responsibility to be placed on our shoulders as well as wanting to safeguard, through its immigration policy, its own borders. How might those approaches clash with each other? How could we come to a decision to deal with that?

Professor Wright: To anyone who reads the *Daily Mail*, it means that there would have to be a stronger border between Scotland and the rest of the UK. However, the numbers game cannot be divorced from the policy.

Scotland's geography shows that it has no land borders with any foreign country, besides—potentially—England. Another aspect is that we have only three international ports of entry by air, and—let us face it—not too many major sea ports any longer.

From the evidence that I have seen, very few people end up at Glasgow airport and apply for asylum. From a policy point of view, if very few people show up and ask for asylum, the politicians will have to decide how many asylum seekers or refugees they want to take in to contribute to addressing the international refugee problem as documented and outlined, and canvassed on, by the United Nations. That is a political question, but my feeling is that because Scotland currently houses a lot of people who entered the UK from outwith Scotland, those people will not be here in the future; the stock of refugees at any point in time will be much smaller than it is now. My estimates suggest that there will be approximately 400 a year. Again, it is hard to forecast, but I doubt that the number will be big.

The UK Government's concern—which is its business, because we are not the UK Government—about Scotland somehow being a sieve through which a lot of undesirables will come in before working their way south is an exaggeration. We read about it daily, but it should not cause concern. We should be deciding how we will make our contribution to the global refugee problem.

Hanzala Malik: I want to take you on in respect of that point. You suggest that the concern is exaggerated, but historically we have seen, across Europe and many other countries, that migrants tend to go to the countries that have the friendliest and softest immigration-rule structures. They then use that country as a springboard to go into other nations. What makes you think that that would not happen in Scotland?

Professor Wright: I am not sure that it happens like that.

Hanzala Malik: It does.

Professor Wright: The numbers do not seem to support the concern that it is a major problem. Countries that are further away from problem areas are more isolated from them; it is harder to get to those places, and the costs of doing so are higher. Scotland is kind of remote, and has limited international access. It is not as if we have a big border so that people could say, "Once we get over that leaky border, we can get into the EU and move around through Schengen and end up somewhere else." That is not the situation now, and it is unlikely to be the situation if Scotland becomes independent.

To go back to the original point, the issue comes down to policy and the need to decide what contribution Scotland, as an independent country, wants to make to addressing the global problem. We should think less about what the United Kingdom might do in response. I suspect that the UK will not have to do much because it will not be a big issue.

No one can forecast the future, but we can look at the experience with other countries. For example, there was supposed to be a big flood recently of Romanians and Bulgarians because the transitional arrangements ended on 1 January 2014. If you have a look at the newspaper this morning, you will see that only a small number came.

Jamie McGrigor: It is a trickle.

Professor Wright: It is a trickle—there have not been the hundreds of thousands described in reports that suggested that half of Bulgaria was going to move to the United Kingdom. There is a lot of exaggeration; when we look at the facts we see that the numbers tend to be relatively small.

My opinion is that Scotland will not, through having a liberal policy, become the world's most popular place for people who are interested in applying for asylum. We can revisit the issue in five years if Scotland is independent because we will then have our own numbers, but there are more pressing concerns.

Clarissa Azkoul: We are talking about a lot of different elements: migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants. Immigration is always a complicated area to discuss. There are a couple of points to think about. Policy is important, and it is important for Scotland to think about what it would want and what sort of model it would be looking at.

One important factor, which Professor Wright mentioned, is the distance involved and Scotland's geographic location. There is a question around whether Scotland would still be within the common travel area. It is important to bear that in mind, because if people are able to travel within the United Kingdom we will need to have some sort of common area between all the countries in the area. Whatever Scotland decides to do will have an effect, because it will have one common border. It is important to consider all those aspects. If people are able to travel within the United Kingdom, you have to have some sort of common areas between all the countries in the area, otherwise whatever you decide to do here will impact on the other areas. You have one common border.

All those are important issues to take into consideration. You should also think about whether you want to attract more people to Scotland, what type of skills you need, where you want them to go and how you will manage that. You need to think about whether you are a transit country now and whether things will change depending on the decisions that Scotland makes. You can look at models elsewhere.

Another important issue is that of whether Scotland will remain in the European Union.

Peter Grady: Earlier, Hanzala Malik said that refugees will seek asylum in countries where reception conditions and the immigration framework are considered to be more favourable. In UNHCR's experience, that is not necessarily the case. A number of factors influence where refugees seek asylum. They are heavily influenced by geographic proximity, by the ability to obtain protection quickly, by family relationships and so on. The Syria crisis provides an example of that; there are 2.7 million refugees in the surrounding countries and only 4 per cent of the refugees have sought asylum in the EU; in 2013, there were 50,000-odd Syrian refugees in the EU.

Hanzala Malik: We have 150 different communities in Scotland. We are a treasured location for a lot of people who have a lot of contacts across the world. We are not an isolated country without contacts. People use current contacts to get to destinations. Therefore, I do not want to say that we are not an easy target, because we are. People encourage immigration by relatives and friends who they perceive to be in danger. We are not as isolated as has perhaps been suggested this morning.

Professor Phipps: On that point, and the question of how attractive Scotland would be to refugees if its policy were perceived to be more favourable, the issue is about the importance of refugee status to refugees. That status is granted by the country that they go to. That means that, in Scotland, there would be a policy question about how people would be given status out of country, not necessarily through the asylum process that Robert Wright outlined.

To follow on from the point that Peter Grady was making, the issues around attraction are complicated. We cannot talk about push and pull issues any longer. There are many different and accidental issues that come between what somebody might say that they want to do in seeking protection and what is actually possible on the ground after what are very precarious journeys.

Again, it strikes me that it is important for Scotland to think about what would be the most humane way of offering sanctuary to people who are fleeing somewhere and have a well-founded fear of persecution. To me, because of the geographical location of Scotland, that points to programmes like the gateway programme and it points to quota systems. It requires us to consider particular examples such as that of New Zealand, which is also geographically remote, to see how such countries have dealt with their refugee population and the issues of quota over the past few years.

There are important issues around the idea of the languages that are spoken and people's family contacts. As Hanzala Malik said, Scotland has at least 150 communities that we know of, but so do many other countries in Europe, and we can learn a lot about humane policies of refugee resettlement.

To me, it is important that we reduce the danger of the precarious journey that asylum seekers make. We have seen the sinking of more boats this week. If we have good policies that work hand in hand with UNHCR's excellent programmes, Governments will be able to enact policies that are responsible and which grant humanitarian protection without the multiple—and very

expensive—traumas that people experience on those journeys.

That is the situation with refugees and refugee status. The situation with migrants is different, but I feel that these are really important issues that Scotland needs to consider.

09:30

Roderick Campbell: Good morning. I want to bottom out this question of asylum and refugee seekers and of whether the common travel area has a particular impact in that respect. Perhaps Professor Wright might comment on the suggestion that was made earlier—but anyone else can respond, too.

Professor Wright: When I wrote about this issue two years ago on the front page of *The Times*, I got a lot of hostile responses. It is not within Scotland's remit to choose to stay in the common travel area. If Scotland wants to be a member of the EU, it will have to reapply and eventually—I do not know how far down the road it will happen—it will have to commit to adopting the Schengen agreement and the euro.

As far as what happens in the short run is concerned, the fact is that a Schengen country that borders a non-Schengen country has to build a border. Because Scotland does not have a border, it cannot be a Schengen country right away. Moreover, we do not know what Ireland is going to do. Is it really going to be committed to staying in the CTA if the rest of the UK becomes the only country in the EU that has not agreed to join up to Schengen or is currently not a member? It is certainly an issue. If the rest of the UK Government perceives Scotland as an easy option for people coming in and if Scotland is in the CTA, there will have to be some form of border control.

In any case, if Scotland becomes independent, it will have to think about the future, which will include thinking about how it moves forward and takes on the responsibilities of being part of Schengen and the euro and putting in place all the other legislation embodied in the Lisbon treaty that, sooner or later, it is going to have to agree and adopt. This is a really sticky point. It is all about what happens on day 1 after the referendum if Scotland votes to be independent versus what Scotland will look like in 20 years, by which time—and taking its previous experience into account—it will have been a long-standing member of the EU.

There is no easy answer to that question. It just complicates things. It is not only Scottish opinion that matters; we have to take into account opinion in the rest of the UK and Ireland, and I have heard nothing from Ireland about what it thinks of this development.

Roderick Campbell: Is there any evidence that asylum seekers are going to Ireland because of the common travel area with the rest of the British isles?

Professor Wright: No. As far as I understand it, Ireland is committed to making its contribution to the world refugee problem and, like Canada and Australia, accepts refugees on the basis of some sort of negotiation.

Roderick Campbell: But if we are looking for evidence on this matter, would Ireland be the place to go?

Professor Wright: Only three countries—Wales, I guess, makes four—are part of the common travel area, so if we are looking at interactions, relationships or processes generated by membership of the common travel area, Ireland is the obvious choice. After all, it is the only country in the area that uses the euro.

Let us look at the Scottish situation again. Twenty per cent of the population here is foreign-born, and most of them were born in England; only 2 per cent of the population is made up of visible minorities. As a result, we would not expect chain migration to happen at a high level in Scotland. Historically, people have tended to go where there are people similar to them, and I just do not see Scotland as a country that will attract a lot of people. That is why you need an immigration system that controls the situation and selects people; in other words, you have to manage the process. If you worry about refugees, asylum and all that business, you simply take your eye off the ball.

You need to think about five groups: economic migrants; students; family-class migrants; asylums; and others. The groups are all different and have different characteristics; they might have different motivations for being here; they make different contributions to society; and their costs to society are different. As far as the numbers are concerned, those groups are numerically by far—indeed, by a mile—the most important. If we believe that given our ageing population we need to grow a labour force with the right skills to maintain or even increase our standard of living and not reduce it, particularly among older people, that is what we should be focusing on instead of worrying about a group of people that is probably going to be very small.

Roderick Campbell: What do the rest of the panel think about that?

Sarah Craig: The Scottish Government's position on the common travel area seems to be that it wants continuity of effect, but the issue is difficult and complex. As we know, the UK is not part of Schengen, but its position with regard to the common European asylum system is more

complex than that. For example, it has opted into some instruments such as the Dublin regulation and opted out of other instruments such as the recast reception conditions directive. Given the UK's complex relationship with the wider area of freedom, security and justice in Europe, the negotiations on membership of the EU that Scotland would have to enter into and which I know that the committee has discussed at previous meetings will clearly be very important.

As Professor Wright has made clear, how the issue of the common travel area plays out is a political question for its other members—in other words, the rest of the UK and Ireland. The point that the committee should probably look to Ireland for evidence is an important one, because it has been able to negotiate similar opt-outs to those of the rest of the UK. We would need to look at that example to find out whether the same approach could be taken for Scotland. If it could, how that would happen would be a question for the rest of the UK, but if we got those structural arrangements what would happen with them would become more of a policy question.

Willie Coffey: I am really glad to hear some of the comments that have been made, particularly Professor Wright's point about how issues with regard to Bulgaria and Romania have been exaggerated in the media. A lot of that is simply playing to the anti-immigration gallery, and I have been saddened by the suggestion that when Scotland develops its own model after independence we might be seen as an easy target. Our system might well be seen as a more humanitarian one that is welcoming to visitors, and I am glad that when Rod Campbell mentioned the example of Ireland we heard that there seems to be no evidence to suggest that people see Ireland as an easy target, a soft touch or a stepping-stone to go elsewhere. It is just not the case, and I am glad that the suggestion has been swept aside.

What should Scotland's system be like compared with the current system in the UK? Should we continue to have dawn raids and have children lifted out of their beds? Should we have detention centres? Should we keep such a system, or should we have a better one in Scotland?

The Convener: The discussion is about to take a very evocative turn. As someone who stood protesting outside Dungavel for 10 or 12 years, I have to say that the subject is very close to my heart. Please jump in.

Hanzala Malik: I should correct Mr Coffey and make it clear that nothing has been swept aside; we just have a difference of opinion. My question was about what the policy is going to be. I have not suggested that we would be a soft touch; I simply want to know whether we could have a

different system that would satisfy everyone. At the end of the day, it does not matter where we are geographically. If people want to come here, they will do so, and I have no doubt that if our immigration policy is softer than others, people will target us. What do we have to do to ensure that our neighbours are happy with our immigration policy?

The Convener: Perhaps we could get answers to the questions that Mr Coffey raised first. In any case, the two issues are tied up with each other; they are both about what we should do differently.

Professor Phipps: I was very pleased by the commitment in the white paper to close Dungavel and to stop dawn raids and forced deportations. However, a future Scotland will have to answer some very difficult questions about what it will do with the people it chooses to return, and it will be important to have a humanitarian policy that has been carefully thought through and which has learned from the considerable mistakes that a number of countries have made on this matter.

That is important for humanitarian and international relations reasons. How we treat nationals of other countries is extremely important in international relations. I already see from work that I do in countries to which people are returned that the policies that the United Kingdom Government has executed are creating considerable unease in populations vis-à-vis the United Kingdom. That is important for the United Kingdom's international and diplomatic relations currently, but it is also a pivotal question for Scotland in the future.

A considerable amount of research has been done on the trauma that occurs when there are sudden raids on people's homes and people spend prolonged periods in detention, particularly when the conditions in detention are very problematic. From the humane and international relations points of view, it is crucial that a future Scotland looks very carefully at those issues without shying away from the difficult questions that have to be asked about what the reintegration policies in countries to which people might be returned would be.

Peter Grady: I want to make a couple of comments on detention, which is obviously a significant issue in the UK. From UNHCR's examination of refugee movements, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that detention deters irregular movement or discourages persons from seeking asylum. Threats to life or freedom in the country of origin are far more likely to be greater push factors.

In our view, human rights, fundamental freedoms and looking at applying detention in a manner that is consistent with the human rights

framework are the starting point for addressing the issue of detention. It is critical to see whether, for example, detention is being applied as a last resort on the basis of an individual assessment and only if alternatives to it cannot be applied effectively. Its use should be exceptional rather than standard.

Sarah Craig: I will briefly answer Willie Coffey's question. It is important that the principles of equality and fairness are very much in play. Those principles should be embedded as a prerequisite in decision making and any appeals system.

Gary Christie: We have set out all the principles that we would like to see for any system that is applied, whether in Scotland or in the UK, from a human rights perspective, based on human rights principles and principles of equality. Some of the principles that are currently being discussed are to do with early intervention, how we deliver public services in Scotland, and ensuring that we get good-quality decisions in asylum decision making and that we get them right first time—the cost of detention, not just for those who have sought asylum but for other migrants, is vast; it is a considerable expense. Getting good decision making right early on saves financial and human costs. It also projects the image of how Scotland would like to perceive itself.

Professor Wright: I want to put a slightly different angle on the matter. Currently, we are part of a larger country, a large number of people apply for asylum in the UK, and the processing goes on here. There is an application procedure, and at the end of the day the answer is usually yes or no. The process can go on for a long period of time.

If you believe what I say, very few people will show up for asylum, so there will be no need for those big facilities. We will agree to accept so many refugees, but they will be refugees; they will not be seeking asylum, so they will not need to be processed. Therefore, there will not be a problem. Most of what we perceive as a problem is from our being part of the United Kingdom and playing that role. Per head, we house more people who apply for asylum than England does. That is the current situation. An independent country will not be like that, and the problem will not be a problem.

However, we need to have a credible asylum policy. A deal is a deal, and there will be rules. Some people will be accepted and some people will not be accepted, but that will be a small number of people and we will not read about that in the newspapers as we do now. I think that it is only a problem because of the current situation and that it will not be a problem in the future.

09:45

I agree with all the comments that have been made. There is lots of guidance from the EU and lots of international good practice in how to deal with people who are bona fide refugees or who are seeking asylum. The current situation in the United Kingdom is not very good—we all agree on that. I hope that we will come up with something better if we are an independent country in the EU.

Jamie McGrigor: I want to ask a question on citizenship but, before I do that, I have another question on immigration.

The Scottish Government's specific proposals for immigration suggest a geographical incentive for immigrants to move to less-populated areas of Scotland. Last night, I saw some figures on the television that showed that Inverclyde is looking at a population drop of about 19 per cent and that Argyll's population is going to drop by about 13 per cent. It would suit equations if we could get people to move to those areas, but how would that work? How could we encourage immigrants to live in those less-populated areas when the people who live there at the moment are moving away from them for probably perfectly understandable reasons?

The Convener: Does Alison Phipps want to answer that question?

Professor Phipps: I will let Robert Wright go first.

Professor Wright: For a long time, I have argued that Scotland does not have to become an independent country to manage immigration to its advantage or to better suit its needs.

In the Canadian provinces and the Australian territories, immigrants agree to stay and work in a particular region for a period of time—that is a labour contract. They sign their name on a contract and the visa that goes in their passport says that that is the case. If they then decide that they do not really like Edmonton, for example, and they move to Toronto, they have broken the contract—they have broken the law—and they will be subject to whatever happens, which is often deportation. It is much harder to manage immigration where that system of government does not exist.

Although it is often downplayed in the debate, getting people to emigrate to places in the first place is the key. I came to Scotland and have stayed for 24 years—I am still here. If someone stays anywhere for about two years, they tend not to move. Immigration policy should say, "We need people here" and should ask people to go there. Payments or whatever could be used to get people to those regions.

Skilled migrants would not go to a place unless they had a job to begin with, so I do not think that that is much of an issue. The issue is where we have a lot of vacancies in a particular area that no one who lives there wants to fill and we have to get people to go there to fill them. The only way that we can fill those vacancies is to get those people there, after which the data suggest that a percentage of them—we do not know the exact number—will stay. Even if it is 1 per cent, that is better than zero. Under the system in Canada and Australia, that is part of immigration law and is the responsibility of the employment ministry, although that is not relevant to people in Inverclyde.

It is worth bringing to the attention of the people who want to emigrate that there are opportunities in certain places and that they should go there.

Professor Phipps: There are two important factors. First, any system of incentive that is about geography should be applied widely to migrants but should not be confused with issues of international and humanitarian protection. It is really important that we do not end up saying that we will be a nicer country in humanitarian ways but only if people are prepared to go to certain areas. It is important that we make clear distinctions and follow the letter of the law regarding the human rights frameworks.

The second factor is an issue that is often overlooked but which very much fits in with what Hanzala Malik said earlier. We tend to think that the incentives are economic and around skills, but when we look at how migrants live their lives we see that the ability to see their family, to care for their family and to have their family close to them is important.

If there is a serious policy of relocating or attracting migrants to certain areas of need, whether geographical or in terms of skills, that needs to be looked at very carefully. Thought also needs to be given to family, family connection and ease of movement so that family members can see one another. That does not necessarily mean people coming to live with them, but it means having visa systems that allow people to see their families.

Underneath that are some real economic gains, because many people in migrant communities regularly remit globally—they send money home to support their families. An important area to consider from an economic point of view is having people closer to one another. We should also look at some of the gender budgeting work that has been done. These are not simple one-migrant-fits-all questions. Gender is extremely important. The ability of men to travel is very different from the ability of women to travel. The Scottish Refugee Council has done extraordinary work in looking at those differences through the refugee women's

strategy group. The issue also pertains across the board around family migration, and it is linked closely to that of geographical incentives.

The Convener: Do you want to comment, Gary? Over the years, I have done a lot of work with the refugee women's strategy group and it would be good to get a wee update.

Gary Christie: Thanks, convener.

I want to follow up on the points that have been made about the issue of attraction. We would love Scotland, whether independent or not, to be involved in far more resettlement of refugees. We are very pleased that the Scottish Government has stated that it will play a role in the Syrian humanitarian programme, but we would like more local authorities in more areas of Scotland to play a role. Although that might contribute to numbers in certain areas, that should not be the principal driver for taking such action; it should be about humanitarian protection.

In relation to the point about the refugee women's strategy group and women, it is important that debates about migration and refugees are gendered. Women fare far worse in their outcomes as regards asylum and integration than men do. Whatever system we might have if Scotland votes for independence, I hope that it would be gendered and would take account of those key factors.

We are doing a piece of work on the importance of ensuring that migrants' voices are heard in the wider debate about immigration and in the debate on the referendum. Regardless of whether migrants or refugees are franchised to vote, it is important that the many of them who will have a future in Scotland have a voice in that process.

The Convener: Do you want to come back on that topic, Jamie?

Jamie McGrigor: I want to ask about citizenship and rights.

The Convener: In that case, I will come back to you later, because Clare Adamson has a point to make about the discussion so far. We will return to citizenship.

Clare Adamson: I indicated that I wanted to speak quite a while ago.

I have to say that I am finding the discussion quite frustrating. Perhaps we should have considered asylum at a different time, because it seems that we are in danger of conflating immigration and the country's economic needs with asylum, which I find divisive. I have a simple question about asylum, which I will follow with a quick question on immigration, if that is okay with the convener.

On asylum, I do not care what is easier. I want to know whether the proposals in the white paper, as they stand, would result in a fairer and more humane system.

Sarah Craig: I think that they could do, but it all depends on how that is done. There are many things in the white paper that are to be welcomed. Essentially, it says that detention would be minimised. That is why I mentioned equality and fairness, which are dealt with elsewhere in the white paper.

The white paper also contains the old reference to “robust ... decision-making”. It is an old song in lots of ways but, because decision making in asylum cases is so difficult, it is really important that it is fair and approached in a robust way. I agree with what Robert Wright has said about a smaller number of people coming to Scotland. However, although the idea of not having to make these terribly difficult decisions at all is extremely attractive, that is a long way in the future. Before then, there would probably have to be a decision-making process, and we could build on what is already there, including, for example, the Scottish guardianship service, which assists children and young people through the process. People talk about the importance of having somebody with them through that process, and the Scottish Refugee Council is involved in managing this particular service, which is very good.

Another point is that legal aid is already different in Scotland, which has resulted in people having more access to legal help as they go through the process. Obviously, quality varies hugely. It can be very good, but it can also be very bad.

Although the white paper contains good proposals that could make things fairer, it is important to ensure that we do not lose the good elements that are already there.

The Convener: My colleague Clare Adamson picked up on a really important issue. As many people around the table know, the conflation of asylum and immigration has been a bugbear of mine. However, the white paper suggests that two separate agencies would be set up, one for asylum and refugee sanctuary and the other for border and immigration issues. The crux of the question is whether or not the model is good. Taking into account Sarah Craig’s point about delivery, I think that the will is there to deliver it but no doubt your experience will help us to convey that.

Gary Christie: I agree that it is important not to conflate the issues. Forced migrants are a small group in Scotland compared with other migrants and it is likely that, whatever scenario we end up with, that will continue to be the case.

We welcomed the proposal in the white paper to create a separate asylum agency; it is what we suggested should happen if Scotland voted yes. The rationale behind the proposal was about creating specialism and expertise and trying to move away from the culture of disbelief in respect of which we would criticise quite a lot of Home Office decision making, to a culture of protection. Because this is a small group that is currently subsumed within the whole Home Office, protection issues somehow get lost in issues of organisational dynamics, enforcement and so on. We must not lose sight of the core point that providing protection to refugees is an international obligation and that it is important for us to provide that protection.

I agree with the idea of how this should be done in the future. In essence, the white paper is suggesting a structure and some principles about how a future system would be delivered. However, the devil is always going to be in the detail. How would staff be trained? What policy would be in place? What oversight would be in place? What appeals system would be in place? A whole series of questions would need to be asked. However, we welcome the initiative in the white paper as a starting point.

Peter Grady: With regard to the independent Scottish asylum agency proposal, we would certainly not, given UNHCR’s experience and our position on structural issues with regard to asylum-seeking bodies, prescribe any particular institutional arrangement. It is not the case that one size fits all; it all depends on the structures in the country concerned—for example, what the constitutional arrangement is. That said, our focus is on ensuring that international standards are being met and that, in that arrangement, those in need of protection are being identified.

10:00

However, we can see that there might be certain advantages in having an independent asylum agency, which, as Gary Christie mentioned, could be used as a means of fostering the expertise that is required to establish an effective asylum and protection identification mechanism. As you are probably all aware, refugee status determination is a highly specialised task, and a dedicated asylum body might be a good way of fostering that expertise.

An independent asylum agency could be a good thing, as it would encourage a protection culture and avoid the conflicting enforcement-related messages that could come from a broader body with a wider immigration remit.

Clare Adamson: That is quite interesting. We have already talked about delivery and policy. If

the UKBA operated in a different way, we might not have concluded in the white paper that we needed two separate agencies. The issue is about making what is in place work.

I will move on to Scotland's economic and social requirements and the white paper's immigration policy. Professor Wright mentioned that a nation did not necessarily have to be independent to make this work. One of the frustrations of devolution has been the removal of the fresh talent initiative and the inability to grant postgraduate visas, and the issue has been raised many times in the Parliament in different contexts, including the reputation of universities and their ability to attract foreign students. Mr Coffey also raised the issue at an event that he hosted for the information technology industry. Although we have heard of the desperate need to attract engineers and qualified IT professionals, the current UK situation, on which we have little influence, has taken a backwards step as far as Scotland's economic needs are concerned.

The white paper has specific proposals to introduce a targeted points-based system; to introduce geographic incentives, which Jamie McGrigor mentioned; and to lower financial maintenance thresholds and salary levels. Will witnesses comment on those proposals?

Professor Wright: I wanted to move on to the other issue. Can I do that? [*Laughter.*] I will do so if we have time.

You mentioned many things, all of which were absolutely spot-on. We need to ask which migratory routes are important for Scotland, and I outlined those routes not only earlier, but in a paper two or three weeks before the white paper was published.

One of those groups is students. We can argue whether we should consider students as immigrants, but that is not the issue. They have to be considered somewhere in the policy framework, and I think that it is fine to include them in the immigrant side of the Government's policy. However, the current system is a disaster. With the removal of the fresh talent initiative, foreign students have to leave six months after they graduate and have to be monitored on a monthly basis. That is making us less competitive, because our chief competitors do not do that.

Our competitors for foreign students are English-speaking countries, of which there are not that many—say, five or six. The issue is critical for Scotland, because the higher education sector here is huge, compared with the sector in England and many other countries. It is a very important part of the economy. Some people say that it is too important and that in the future it will have to

be smaller, but it does not help if Westminster policy hampers our ability to attract students.

Although students regularly apply to do a PhD with me, they end up going to Canada because they can stay in work afterwards for a period, get some experience, work on their languages et cetera. Those things are critical, and I am very happy that the white paper has said that we will go back to basically what the fresh talent initiative was.

If we think about the larger picture, we can see that it is a no-brainer. If someone wants to come to your country and pay to be educated to high standard, you want them to stay. For one thing, they will make a direct economic contribution, which will not cost you anything. Why would you not want them to do that? I do not understand why, from a rational economics point of view, the UK has the system that it has, and why Scotland is forced to follow it. It is economically irrational in two ways: first, there is no cost to us in educating these people; and, secondly, they are highly skilled and will be employed afterwards. That is why you have to keep students at the forefront of your discussions.

The points-based system applies not to students, but to economic migrants. Basically, the potential supply of people who want to live, work and stay in Scotland is inelastic. Whatever number we want, we can attract. That is not an issue. The points-based system says, basically, "Here's the price to you of emigrating, and it can be raised or lowered." The system has to be in place so that we can see what kind of numbers we will generate if the thresholds had to be higher or lower. I think that, for Scotland to get the people that it needs, the income thresholds will have to be much higher and, if they are much higher, we will be attracting a higher-skilled person—and what is wrong with that? That is the point about the points-based system: you can change the numbers.

The same thing applies to the UK system: you have to get it up and running, and then look at the experience. The UK Government has decided that immigration should be reduced at all costs. That is the policy, so this particular discussion does not happen with regard to UK immigration policy.

As for asylum, it always gets the attention and gets people's emotions going. However, although important, it is, numerically speaking, a very small issue. Really, the issue is about students.

The final category that we should talk about is the family class. How far do you want this to go down the family tree? It makes no sense to me to allow someone to live, work and stay in Scotland because they have a Scottish parent or grandparent. There is no built-in advantage to those people coming here. You would be far better

selecting someone based on their skill level rather than on an accident of birth. That is one area in which I disagree totally with the white paper. Immigration needs to be managed, and basing such decisions on fortunes of birth is not managing it. You might get good people or you might get bad people. It is important to keep people in different categories and consider the issues in different ways.

With regard to the white paper, I think that the asylum system here will be better for two reasons. First, in Scotland, there is a greater appreciation of the benefits of immigration and less emphasis on and concern about the costs. That view is reflected in the opinions of politicians and, to a certain extent, the population. Secondly, Scotland will sign up to the other half of the rules that the EU says will apply to asylum seekers and refugees. The fact that Scotland will be agreeing to a larger set of principles that people think are fairer and better will mean that the system has to be better.

That is where I stand. I have been arguing these points for some time, so I will stop there.

The Convener: You have put your points very well.

As we have about 20 minutes left, we will move on to citizenship.

Jamie McGrigor: The relationship between citizenship and voting rights was raised by Professor Shaw in her written evidence and by Mr Christie a moment ago. As far as I know, EU citizens can at the moment vote in European and local elections in the UK and in elections to the Scottish Parliament, but they cannot vote in UK parliamentary elections. If we were independent, would EU citizens be allowed to vote in Scottish elections? Does anyone have any idea about that?

The Convener: That might be a question for the minister when he comes before us.

Jamie McGrigor: Okay—I will plant that one.

My next question has been asked of me by two or three EU nationals who work in the Highlands and Islands, and I thought that, since the experts were here, I would ask them for their views. If there were a yes vote and Scotland had to reapply for EU membership with the result that, for a period, it was not a member of the EU, what would be the position of EU nationals working in Scotland at that time?

Hanzala Malik: I would have thought that, morally, the employer would be obliged to continue to employ an individual to the end of their contract.

Jamie McGrigor: I do not know about the moral position—I was just wondering whether anyone had thought about the issue.

Hanzala Malik: They should honour the contract.

Sarah Craig: I think that the position is similar to that described by Professor Sir David Edward of the Court of Justice of the European Union in relation to the position of Scottish citizens, which is that the rights that are currently being enjoyed would continue. Hanzala Malik is essentially right; one would have to assume that there would be some sort of continuity.

Ultimately, that is one of the issues that the experts would put back to the politicians. It would have to be part of the negotiation. That is why it is important to think about things such as membership of the common travel area and the nuances of the situation. It is an important question.

Jamie McGrigor: I have been asked at least three times by three different people working in the Highlands and Islands about what their status will be if we are not members of the EU.

Clarissa Azkoul: Legally, if Scotland was not part of the EU, they would fall under Scottish legislation, whatever that would be.

Professor Wright: It should not be that much of a problem if they are EU citizens holding EU passports. If Scotland were to say, “We will honour that relationship,” if time ticked away and the negotiation went on and if 18 months later we became a new EU member state, that would solve the problem. However, there are a lot of ifs in there. If it took more like five years instead of 18 months—or if it never happened—that would be a different kettle of fish. There is also something in the EU called the blue card system that does not enter into this debate and which deals with these kinds of issues in respect of immigrants.

Again, I do not think that this is a major issue; it can be dealt with politically. It is just up to the Scottish Government to decide that those individuals can live, work and stay here as per normal, because X number of months or years down the road we will be a new EU member state and the status quo will resume. There are a lot of other concerns about EU membership.

Clarissa Azkoul: What would happen to Scottish nationals who are in the UK or in Europe? It is the same thing.

Professor Wright: Exactly.

The Convener: I think that the Scottish Government’s position is to honour the citizenship of anyone who is currently living, working or

studying in Scotland in the event of a hiatus, although it would argue for continuity of effect.

Professor Phipps: It is also worth putting these sorts of questions into historical perspective. Scotland would not be the first country to address questions like this, although I should say that it is not the same question. In footnote 3 of our written evidence, we refer to a paper by Professor Bernard Ryan, who has sketched that out historically in the context of the Republic of Ireland, where different temperatures, you might say, have been taken that fit into those questions of diplomacy between countries.

There was a similar situation in Germany throughout the cold war, where different arrangements were made. States made political decisions and decisions about international relations, and they put in place frameworks around citizenship to address the kinds of structural questions that you are raising. There is historical evidence for us to look at, should we find ourselves in such situations in future. We would indeed see those as questions for politicians to take a view on, based on the evidence of the historical record.

Jamie McGrigor: GRAMNet raised the issue of whether there would be a written or an oral test to apply to be a Scottish citizen. What are the panel's views on that?

The Convener: Is the question whether there should be a written or an oral test?

Jamie McGrigor: All right—put it that way, if you want to.

The Convener: A question about the content of any test would probably be another one for the minister, but if you are asking whether there should be a test, that allows us to open up the conversation.

Jamie McGrigor: I am sorry. I will go any way you want, convener.

Professor Phipps: There is a considerable amount of research that shows that written and oral tests are highly problematic and very discriminatory. They tend to discriminate particularly against people who may not have high levels of education or who may not have been schooled in systems like our own. There are real problems with the tests that we have in the UK at the moment and, in my view, they are based on moribund notions of education and pedagogy. It is difficult to see how they contribute to anything that we might want to understand as good citizenship.

That said, there is some evidence that ceremonies and processes of education towards integration that happen over quite a long period of time are valuable in many different directions. That is our view, and I argue quite strongly that there

should not be written tests; there should certainly not be written tests in the form that they take at the moment for the “Life in the United Kingdom” test.

10:15

Peter Grady: I apologise for bringing the discussion back to asylum-related issues, but I have a point about language testing for refugees. We recognise that language is fundamental to the integration and cohesion of communities, but I echo Alison Phipps's point about testing not being appropriate, particularly with regard to refugees. They often have a traumatic history and they come with a lot of vulnerabilities. They might also have had limited education prior to arriving. Therefore, UNHCR's view is that stringent language testing for refugees would be inappropriate.

Alex Rowley: My question, which I have been waiting patiently to ask for 40 minutes or so, is about economic migration. We have not touched on that area, but it is probably the biggest area to discuss in terms of Scotland's future. I note that although the UK Independence Party's predictions about Romanians and Bulgarians did not come close to coming true, there is still more economic migration than the UK Government has predicted. That is not necessarily a bad thing; indeed, it is a good thing for the UK economy.

Earlier, Professor Wright talked about our population of 5.5 million or so and the fact that the demographics show that an independent Scottish state would have significant issues in future. There will be a need for economic migration, and the white paper is clear that there will be a proactive policy on that. Do the witnesses have a view on the number of economic migrants that the Scottish economy will need?

Professor Wright: I just want to answer the other question about this language business, because my view is probably the majority view. It has been demonstrated that having the English language is critical for integration into the labour market and all the other things that go with it, so I think that there should be a test, part of which should involve people demonstrating some minimal level of knowledge of the English language. It is also our responsibility to make sure that the policy and the apparatus are in place so that people who want that can obtain it. If they have to have it, we will have to supply it to them. There is no way that you can function well in an economy if you do not know the language of that economy and cannot read the signs or whatever. That is why most countries have such a requirement.

There is also a criminal background test as part of the immigration system. The committee might want to think about that as well.

I go back to the point about economic immigration. I am sorry, but economics has to be at the heart of immigration policy. We need to grow the labour force. We need to make sure that firms in the public and private sectors have the right number of people with the right skills, and that is not going to happen because of the demography of Scotland. If there is zero net migration, the labour force will shrink and the population will fall. No businessman or economist can say that it is possible to do well in the future and generate economic growth with labour force decline. That just will not happen, because the necessary increases in productivity—we have estimated them—are so large. It really is a critical question.

I gave evidence in the UK Parliament, and I was asked the same question: “How many? How many?” Well, let us look at the current situation. We have net migration of 25,000. My work says that even a doubling of that will not generate the growth that we need. It is not going to happen just through higher levels of immigration driving up levels of net migration; we will have to look at a lot of other areas in which we can get savings and increase productivity.

It is critical that we have control of a managed immigration system that meets labour market needs. However, that is not the answer—it is not the solution by a mile—which is a bit worrying. We can do other things, such as realign the education system a bit and think about the mindset that the majority of public services must be provided by public employers. There are loads of things that we can do, and we will have to do them, because no single policy on its own will work.

Whatever the migration figure, it will be larger than the numbers that we are dealing with today. As I said, the current level is 25,000 and doubling that will not be enough. If there is a magic number, that number is so large that it would not be feasible in terms of what is available in the housing market, for example.

Clarissa Azkoul: As Professor Wright rightly said, different models could be considered for different schemes. For example, targeted short-term labour migration programmes could be considered if areas were identified in which a particular type of migrant was needed. That might be a way of increasing production and, at the same time, it could lead to other forms of settlement. However, a wide range of different models would need to be considered.

The Convener: Willie, do you want to come in on this topic?

Willie Coffey: Aye. I want to say a wee bit about the language test deployed by the UK Government. Many of our citizens whose first

language is Gaelic, Welsh or even Irish might even fail that test to remain where they live. That is absolutely bonkers. The test disregards where we all came from. Professor Phipps mentioned that it is based on moribund notions of education and pedagogy, which I thought was a really nice way to put it. I think that the feeling round the table is that people dismiss that ridiculous approach.

I am disappointed that the invitation to the Home Office was rejected and that people from the Home Office have not even bothered to appear before the committee to answer some of the questions that members might have wished to put to them. I am extremely disappointed about that scandalous disregard for the Scottish Parliament.

The Convener: The Home Office referred us to its paper, “Scotland analysis: Borders and Citizenship”, and to the Scottish Affairs Committee, but neither addresses any of our inquiry’s remit. It is very disappointing that no one from the Home Office has come along, so that we could put questions to them. We would have been kind to them, and it would have been nice to have them here.

Rod, did you want to come in on the citizenship aspect?

Roderick Campbell: Not specifically, although I want to probe what impact economic migration would have on the common travel area. Does anyone have any comments on that?

Professor Wright: The only thing that I can say about that is what I said earlier. If someone from outside the EU applies to immigrate to an independent Scotland, it might decide to issue them with a visa. The visa would say that they were a landed immigrant or whatever and that they had the right to live, work and stay in Scotland—and that is all. It would not necessarily give them the right to move to England to work and, if they were to do that, they would be breaking the law, unless Scotland signed up to the blue card system, in which case, after two years, an immigrant who was not an EU citizen could go and work in other countries that were signed up to that system.

The subject that you raise is not an issue, unless you think that a lot of people would come to Scotland and run off to England to work illegally, which does not make sense to me. Many of the immigrants to Scotland would move into jobs as soon as they got here, because one of the criteria would be that, if they had a job lined up or were prepared to fill a vacancy, they would get so many more points for doing that, so they would come and do that.

As far as the idea that people would somehow immigrate to Scotland, break the law, jump on a bus and move to London because that is where

they really wanted to be is concerned, there is no evidence of that happening in other countries that are in a similar situation. The important thing is to get people here in the first place, so the challenge is to have in place an immigration system that works.

Sarah Craig: The emphasis on integration in the community means that education, which Professor Wright mentioned, and housing must be available on an equal basis and must be well funded. There is evidence that those are the things that make people feel at home and part of the community, which makes it more likely that they will integrate. Therefore, those factors are important as well.

On the common travel area, there are similarities between the UK's immigration policy and Ireland's. It has been said that they align in lots of areas although, in the past, Ireland had a separate economic migration policy. It does not have that so much now, but that is probably more to do with the economic situation in which it finds itself than with the common travel area.

It would be good if those questions could be aired at a governmental level. I agree with Mr Coffey that it would be good to hear the Home Office's view on them.

The Convener: The Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf, will come along at the end of our one-off inquiries to answer all our questions, so we will save them all up for him.

Do you want to add something, Professor Phipps?

Professor Phipps: Yes. It is related to the broader discussion of economic migration. As Robert Wright has said, it is tempting to see migrants as a plug-and-play solution—we plug them in and they do economic stuff, then we pull them out and they go back home. Of course, human beings are messy, complicated creatures. They fall in love, they bring their families over to visit them as tourists and they may bring other members of their families along to look after their children. All kinds of different things happen that are part of their social and economic contribution but which are not mentioned in many of these debates. There is a danger in simplifying discussions of economic migration and not looking at the social effects.

The issue also relates to the student body and the migration of students, which we discussed earlier. I endorse everything that Robert Wright said. The policy that we have in the UK at present is diminishing the quality of our education because we are missing out on vital perspectives from other parts of the world that we need for our thinking. Those who are being educated in our

universities are missing out on the opportunity to develop vital intercultural abilities, skills and connections that would serve them well in the future. There is also an economic dimension. At any graduation at any university, we see many international students graduating whose parents come over and spend some time—possibly several weeks—on holiday in Scotland.

We cannot divorce the issues from one another; we need to take a holistic approach when we look at them. When we ask questions about economic migration, we must also ask questions about families, tourism and social effects.

The Convener: We are in the final few minutes of the session. Does anybody have anything to add to what we have talked about this morning, which we have missed? The evidence that we have heard has given a focus for our questions for the minister, who may be able to clarify and expand on the Government's policy. As Professor Wright said, the devil is in the detail. Perhaps that is what we need to ask the minister about. If there is anything that anyone is itching to say, now is your chance. We will be delighted if you go away and think, "I should have said that," or "I should have informed them of this." Please continue to send us information, as it helps to inform the committee.

This evidence session has been a very positive experience. It is sometimes difficult to have such debate, given the backdrop of the type of debate that goes on in the *Daily Mail*, which Professor Wright mentioned. The conversation this morning has been gratifying for all of us, and the committee thanks you for engaging in that conversation in a civilised and humane way.

I suspend the meeting for 10 minutes to allow a comfort break before we move to the next item.

10:29

Meeting suspended.

10:42

On resuming—

Annual Report

The Convener: I welcome everyone back. Item 2 is consideration of the committee's annual report; a draft copy is included in members' papers. The annual report reflects the work that we have done in the past year and some topics on which we have focused, with information on how many meetings we have had and so on. Do members have any comments, questions or requests for clarification?

Willie Coffey: The report is very good. It is a brief summary of the work that we did, and we appreciate the clerks' work in putting it together. I suggest only that we include links to reports that we produced and make them available in an online or paper version.

Hanzala Malik: Do we want to include any of the committee's press releases or information that we have released via the embassies for information?

The Convener: The press releases would not go in the annual report.

Hanzala Malik: No—we would not put in the actual press releases; we should simply refer to the ones that we produced, because they represent work that the committee did, unless we are not happy with them.

The Convener: The report must take a certain format, and we cannot include the press releases, because they are not up on the website. We will just cover what we have done in committee.

Hanzala Malik: Perhaps the press releases should be there—we can take that on board for the future. I do not want to make life difficult for people but, if we do things, we should talk about them and share them.

The Convener: Are there any other points?

Jamie McGrigor: No.

Hanzala Malik: Do we agree to take my point on board for the future?

The Convener: I think that we would need to have a procedural discussion on it.

Roderick Campbell: I am very happy with the report, and I thank the clerking team for its work on the report.

The Convener: Are members happy to agree the annual report?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Thank you.

10:45

Meeting continued in private until 11:22.

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