



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Thursday 21 February 2013

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**Thursday 21 February 2013**

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**EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**4<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2013, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)

**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)

\*Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

\*Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Jeanna Brady (Scottish Parent Teacher Council)

Janice Byers (Dumfries and Galloway Council)

Councillor Douglas Chapman (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Iain Ellis (National Parent Forum of Scotland)

Tony Finn (General Teaching Council for Scotland)

Tom Hamilton (General Teaching Council for Scotland)

Neil Logue (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland)

Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP) (Committee Substitute)

Robert Nicol (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Ann Robertson (City of Edinburgh Council)

Richard Tallaron (Le Francais en Ecosse)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Ian Duncan

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 6



## Scottish Parliament

### European and External Relations Committee

*Thursday 21 February 2013*

[The Deputy Convener *opened the meeting at 09:00*]

### Foreign Language Learning in Primary Schools Inquiry

**The Deputy Convener (Hanzala Malik):** Good morning and welcome to everyone. This is the fourth meeting of the European and External Relations Committee in 2013. At this juncture I request that those present switch off mobile phones and electronic equipment, as they interfere with our communications system.

I welcome our panel this morning. We are fortunate to have many distinguished academics present. They are Tom Hamilton, director of education and professional learning at the General Teaching Council for Scotland; Tony Finn, chief executive of the General Teaching Council for Scotland; Richard Tallaron, director of *Le Français en Ecosse*; Iain Ellis, chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland; and Jeanna Brady, convener of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council.

I thank you all for being here this morning and for giving us your evidence, which has been very helpful. I now invite questions, starting with Clare Adamson.

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Thank you convener, and good morning panel.

I will ask a few questions about the funding issues that have been raised in a number of the written submissions. I want to get an understanding of whether you believe that the aspirations and ambitions of the Scottish Government can be delivered with the funding mechanisms that have already been put on the table. Does anyone want to start?

**The Deputy Convener:** That was the easy one.

**Tony Finn (General Teaching Council for Scotland):** The General Teaching Council can start on that. We are not responsible for funding so we can express comments without any such responsibility.

It is important to note that the funding that was suggested by the working party—of which I was a member—was indicative, which suggests that we were not sure exactly what would be needed. We recognised at the outset that there would be a need for two to three times the £4 million that was

originally planned for the delivery of modern languages. The programme is to be sustained over two sessions of Parliament, so inevitably the costs could escalate.

The developments that local authorities and schools undertake will have indicative costs. The costs are probably most likely to be found in teacher education and in the provision of resources. It may be that the costs that are currently indicated will have to be reassessed and revised as time goes on. However, as a starter, it is a welcome introduction to the funding that local authorities have.

**Richard Tallaron (Le Français en Ecosse):** We train primary and secondary teachers, and funding is crucial to the project. When I started running MLPS—modern languages in the primary school—training 10 years ago, we used to do 27 full days. It worked well but was very expensive to run. We can be more creative with funding now. We need face-to-face training with the teachers, but we can use the funding for more online resources. Online resources will be an important part of this project.

We can also be creative with European Union funding. In my written evidence, I mentioned that we run exchanges between Scotland and France and between Scotland and Spain. We have around 2,000 primary schools in Scotland, and I also work with Créteil in Paris, which has 2,500 primary schools. We can find partner schools between Scotland and France and between Scotland and Spain. Funding is important but we can be creative with it.

**Jeanna Brady (Scottish Parent Teacher Council):** From the perspective of parents, we are concerned about the resources and the sustainability of those resources, particularly when it comes to stepping up the teaching qualifications.

Foreign language teaching is a specialism like any other specialism, and we believe that it should be treated as such. Foreign language teaching is not an adjunct to a primary school teacher's string of skills; it requires specific language qualifications. That point is important in order to form a good basis for young people to continue to learn skills as they grow up and in adult life.

**Iain Ellis (National Parent Forum of Scotland):** Our concern about the funding is whether it is enough, as £4 million across the whole of Scotland is not a lot of money. There is also a question about whether it is sustainable. If you put the funding into the director's pot, what is to say that it will be used for languages? That is a big issue for us.

**Tony Finn:** On the point that Iain Ellis made, for a city such as Edinburgh the grant aided expenditure allocation from £4 million would be

somewhere in the region of £220,000. That is not an awful lot of money, but it is a start.

The question that Richard Tallaron raised is interesting because, as Jeanna Brady said, we are not simply looking at giving some top-up support. We are considering providing a base of knowledge that teachers are able to communicate to pupils.

There will be different levels in that. There will be the qualification that is needed to enter or exit from teacher education to work in a primary school and the qualification that is necessary for secondary teachers, of which I was one in modern languages. We must also consider the teachers who are currently working in schools and will not come through any new system over the next 10 years. There will need to be quite an impact on those teachers as well as on teachers who come into the profession in years to come.

If the project is taken forward, we must ensure that it is taken forward as part of a serious development in Scottish education for the purposes that are outlined in the working group report of improving language qualifications, cultural knowledge and social opportunities for the young people of the future.

**Clare Adamson:** A representative of the British Council gave evidence at our last meeting, and one of the concerns that he raised was the drop in the number of foreign language assistants across Scotland. I would like your opinion on the role of foreign language assistants in the proposals that we have.

Part of the committee's work includes making visits. Richard Tallaron and I went to St Elizabeth's primary school in Hamilton, where we saw technology being used to deliver some of the curriculum, for both student instruction and support. I would like your opinion on the role of technology and resources, not in replacing foreign language assistants but perhaps in providing some of the work that they would have done in the past.

**Richard Tallaron:** Foreign language assistants are crucial for this project, but modern technology will help us. If we can link a primary school and a class in that school to a school in Spain or France, we get the culture that foreign language assistants would bring to Scotland but we get it using internet facilities and videoconferencing, with which all our schools are well equipped.

Let us use those facilities, as it is cheap to do so. As I said, we have around 2,000 primary schools in Scotland, and small is beautiful. We can use those facilities, and we should use them more.

**Jeanna Brady:** Classroom assistants are vital in schools to support classroom teachers, and qualified foreign language assistants equally so.

We see such assistants as integral to the teaching staff of a school. That is clear whether they are musicians, language assistants or scientists.

To build on Richard Tallaron's point, we have discussed the question whether, as languages are integral rather than additional to the curriculum, arithmetic could be taught in Spanish, for example. We will come back to which languages should be taught, but what better way is there to engage the young boys who want to play football for Barcelona early in the curriculum than by teaching them numeracy skills in Spanish? Through the use of joined-up classrooms, young people could be taught Scottish history in Mandarin at the same time as a Chinese class in Beijing was doing the same thing.

To answer the question, I believe that qualified language assistants are vital in supporting the classroom teacher to enable that to happen.

**Tony Finn:** The use of foreign language assistants and modern digital technology can offer significant advantages because, for many of our students in schools, the fact that the language that they are studying comes from a different culture and a different context is an issue. Contextualising the language through the use of foreign language assistants or modern technology helps to bridge that gap.

If we look at other European countries that have made greater progress than Scotland has, we find that the culture of English-speaking people is much more prominent in those countries than the culture of French-speaking people or Spanish-speaking people is in our country. For example, it is not uncommon in the Netherlands, northern France or other parts of France or Spain for people to regularly watch television programmes that are streamed in English.

I think that that would be a significant step forward. As a linguist, I listen to and watch programmes in my foreign languages. We can all find things that would interest us. The reference to Barça might be inappropriate after the team's result last night, but there are many good schools in which teachers have established links with foreign football players who play with clubs in Scotland to improve the process of contextualisation.

Foreign language assistants are relatively cheap, but over the past 15 to 20 years they have drifted away. My colleague in Angus will speak to the committee later; Angus Council is one of the few authorities that have kept a high number of FLAs. In most other local authorities, FLAs have understandably disappeared because of financial constraints. As they cost very little, bringing them back would be a helpful step forward in the development of language learning.

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Con):** I have a supplementary to Clare Adamson's questions on funding. In its submission, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland says:

"There is, quite clearly, insufficient funding available at this time to deliver the 35 recommendations of the report of the Languages Working Group".

ADES goes on to say that it welcomes the £120,000 that is being provided to fund the pilot projects and the Government's

"commitment, subject to Parliamentary budget approval, to provide an additional £4 million in the new financial year".

It does not say whether it thinks that that will be enough. Will the £4 million be enough to deliver the Barcelona project?

**Iain Ellis:** I will answer that: no.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Have you quantified how much money is required?

**Iain Ellis:** I come from West Dunbartonshire. Our council's cut of the funding will be about £50,000 to £55,000 to teach 34 primary schools an additional two languages. That is not a lot of money.

The previous question was about language assistants. As Tony Finn said, language assistants are a cheaper solution, but they are one that needs to be embedded. Will £50,000 cover the cost? I cannot see that being the case.

**The Deputy Convener:** Rather than use the phrase "cheaper solution", we should ask which solution is more economical. I do not think that anyone wants to be described as cheap.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Do you think that the Barcelona project—the one-plus-two model—is an expensive way of achieving what we are trying to achieve, which is children in Scotland speaking more languages, or do you think that it is quite a good idea?

**Iain Ellis:** In principle, it is a great idea. The concern of parents is about how it will be funded. Will it be sustainable in the long term? The £4 million will be a good starter, but I am concerned about where we will go in two, three and four years' time.

**Jamie McGrigor:** So, although you say that the £4 million will be a good starter, you still think that £50,000 will not be enough to allow your local authority to cover the budget.

**Iain Ellis:** It will be very tight.

09:15

**Jeanna Brady:** I support what Iain Ellis is saying. We are concentrating on primary schools

today. In my experience, they have embraced the curriculum and are incorporating different teaching methods. They will pick up the aspiration and run with it. However, my concern is that, when our children go to high school—with its different level of complexity and challenges—they will come to a screaming halt, and the momentum of the good work that is done through the early years and in the primary schools will not be sustained, as the work cannot be delivered at high school. From a parent's perspective, that is a real concern. It involves a different scale of resources altogether.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Should all future primary school teachers have a language qualification, as is recommended by the working group? If so, at what level should that qualification be? Do you think that that proposal is feasible? How long would it take to implement?

**Tom Hamilton (General Teaching Council for Scotland):** It is a good aspiration to have. "Language Learning in Scotland—A 1+2 Approach" talks about having a language qualification at Scottish credit and qualifications framework level 6, which is the equivalent of a higher qualification. That seems perfectly reasonable. However, there are real challenges in getting there, both in the qualifications with which people come to teacher education and in the universities' ability to provide the qualification if it is to be an exit requirement.

There is undoubtedly a tension, because there are lots of competing voices trying to get their tuppenceworth into teacher education. There is a real imperative on modern languages, as we have not done well in that area for a number of years. However, the people who are concerned with science, technology, engineering and mathematics—the STEM subjects—want similar things put into place.

There is a danger that we set the entry qualifications for teacher education so high that we do not get anyone coming into the area. Already, most of the universities are heading towards quite high qualifications—for example, the University of Glasgow requires four As at higher level to get into the undergraduate teacher education programme. If we start specifying too minutely the entry qualifications, we will end up with a narrow cohort of people coming into teaching. We already say that higher English and standard grade credit maths are necessary—that will change when the new qualifications come in. If we say that someone must have a higher in a modern language, as well as highers in maths and science, the danger is that we will not get people into the courses.

There must be a realistic appreciation of what we can do and how long it is going to take. That is a fair point to make: we are not going to change

the situation overnight. We do not have enough people with modern language qualifications applying to go into teaching. There will have to be a build-up of momentum to the project, which is why the timescale that is being spoken of—over two sessions of Parliament and, probably, beyond that—is quite sensible.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Do the existing teachers and teaching assistants require more resources in order for them to teach the languages? Do they need more training and support?

I have a specific question for Le Français en Ecosse. How should teachers be trained to meet the Scottish Government's proposals?

**Richard Tallaron:** First, I agree with Tom Hamilton. There will be a challenge at primary level, secondary level and in further education. However, we have seven years in which to achieve the aims. I am generally quite optimistic about the matter, and I think that we can succeed.

We may need to be creative in further education, for example. There is no doubt that, for this project to work, new teachers will need to have achieved a certain level in the language. In initial teacher training, we will need to do something to ensure that, when new teachers start working in primary schools in Scotland, they have a good level of French or Spanish or whatever. Of course, they might need to have that ability not when they start college but by the time that they finish college four years later. If they do not have the language at higher level when they arrive at college, they could be trained to that level during the four years.

Do current teachers need more training? Yes, they do.

**Jeanna Brady:** As a general comment, I think that we should be raising the bar for new entrants to the teaching profession. I think that the teaching profession really needs support from parents, and politicians like yourselves should sponsor that to raise the status of teachers in society. I think that there has been a lot of dumbing down of the profession, whose terms and conditions have also been squeezed over the past few years. As a parent, I would like the qualifications for teaching practitioners to be raised across the board.

As another comment, I think that the existing teachers in classrooms need support. They have already gone through a massive change with the curriculum. In the secondary school sector, given that they need skills to help pupils deal with peer pressure and bullying as well as skills for teaching their own class subject, a lot is being asked of our classroom teachers. In the primary school setting, I think that it is no longer sufficient to have just a teaching qualification; primary teachers need computational and numeracy skills as well as the

ability to communicate to young people how to pick up other languages. As Tony Finn mentioned, there needs to be a change in culture and a shift in teaching methods within the schools, and we need to enable our headteachers and classroom teachers to achieve that.

I make those comments from a parent's perspective.

**Tony Finn:** In looking at the needs of current primary teachers, we can go back over the previous programmes that have been used to prepare primary teachers to teach a linguistic component. Over the period since the late 1980s and early 1990s, there have been significant improvements, and the work done by Richard Tallaron has certainly helped.

One difficulty of the programmes that we have used to date is that they were never attested to or accredited when people completed them. The programmes were as good as they might be, but no one could ever be certain just how good they were. When I was an evaluator of a programme in the early 1990s, the programmes had a bit more rigour and a bit more resource to support them. However, over the period, I think that the funding provided for European modern languages increasingly went into the local authority budget allocation and was therefore used differently by different local authorities. Some local authorities used the funding extremely well, and others perhaps used it not quite so well.

Our primary schools currently have a range of teachers. Some are well equipped to take forward this agenda, whereas others are less so. Where a primary school is dependent on one person who has had the training—sometimes a single teacher will deliver the learning for all the others—that comes into sharp focus when the person leaves and the primary school is unable to continue to teach a modern foreign language.

In addition, we have a number of teachers who are qualified modern linguists, who might even have completed a degree in a foreign language at university before training as a primary teacher, but who just want to teach their own class rather than get involved in servicing the language experience of other children. That is a perfectly respectable position to adopt, but it means that our primary schools currently include: teachers who have been trained using the models over the past 20 years; teachers who have graduate qualifications in modern languages; and teachers who have a higher qualification in a modern language. However, we do not know at the moment where they are or who they all are. We need to do an audit to find out the extent of the issue that we face.

We will certainly need to look at the qualifications of those entering the teaching profession—that is a responsibility of the General Teaching Council—but it would be inappropriate for us to raise the entry standards too quickly, given that there are youngsters in our schools who might become very good primary teachers but who have not been prepared for the change in expectation. That is one reason why the working group suggested that the qualification should be reached either on entry to or on exit from a university teacher training course.

We should not lose sight of the significance of that issue, and we need to balance it against the other expectations about the curriculum that Tom Hamilton referred to. On the one hand, we need to ensure that we have a continuity of expectation for the future, so that people understand the need for language competence and have an understanding of the pedagogy required to teach languages in the primary context. On the other, we need to begin to address the needs of the large number of existing teachers who have not been through any form of language training, of whom some may require a small top-up whereas others will require a very significant top-up. It is difficult to predict the numbers, but there are certain needs that will have to be met.

**Iain Ellis:** I totally agree with what Tony Finn has said. Just now, we rely on the good will of teachers. Some schools probably do not teach languages because none of the teachers wants or feels confident enough to do so, as Tony Finn said. I know that, in my own school, the person who teaches French did a higher in the language when he was at school. He is now going to France for weeks to do courses. He is doing that off his own bat, although the courses are paid for.

To me, we need to deal with the issue during teacher training, where it should be part of the coursework. Maybe people should not need a higher in a modern language when they start a course, but language learning should be incorporated into the coursework. We need to start looking at that. We need to get to the stage where language learning becomes part of the coursework for virtually every teacher in training. I think that that is the only way forward.

**Tom Hamilton:** Let me just add to the points that have been made over the past couple of minutes. Hand in hand with the changes in schools that have been alluded to, there needs to be a change in the confidence level of the teachers. That is part of the issue that Tony Finn was talking about.

Among the international research on what makes a successful education system is the TALIS project. TALIS stands for teaching and learning international survey, and the project is run

by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Although Scotland and the United Kingdom are not involved in the project, a significant point that TALIS makes is that successful education systems have teachers with high levels of self-efficacy. If we can bolster that by encouraging and enthusing teachers so that we have teachers who do not hide their light under a bushel but want to celebrate and join in the success of the school, it will be a big move forward.

Since becoming an independent entity last year, the GTC now has the ability to accredit programmes. We always accredited the initial teacher education programmes, but we can now accredit other programmes that lead to things under a system that we call professional recognition.

Professional recognition is just that: it is a professional pat on the back, if you like, from the professional regulatory body to help celebrate the good things that go on in teaching and in Scottish schools. To me, giving people professional recognition for what they are doing in modern languages within primary and secondary schools could be part of moving the culture forward positively.

**Clare Adamson:** I have a couple of quick questions. I also sit on the Education and Culture Committee, which has been looking into the quality of literacy and numeracy in schools. The evidence that we have received has suggested quite strongly that a higher qualification in maths and English does not necessarily qualify a person to teach literacy and numeracy. Can the pedagogy of language teaching be given to someone who does not have a higher qualification in a language? Can that be incorporated into their training?

On the standard of qualification, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has said that his ambition is to have a master's degree to raise the status of teaching. It has been said that teachers would come out with an empty envelope that would be filled by continuing professional development and professional qualifications that would lead to the master's degree. Could CPD in language teaching be incorporated into that process?

09:30

**Tony Finn:** Yes. On your first question on the pedagogy of teaching a language, a teacher must have at least a degree of understanding of the language before the pedagogy can be presented—that is probably self-evident.

You made a good point about the need for a qualification in maths, because researchers have

found that the parts of mathematics that are most relevant to the work that is done in a primary school are what those of us old enough to remember would call arithmetic. The confusion that can arise sometimes is that someone might be very good at elements of mathematics but not particularly well trained to teach those arithmetical concepts. A modern foreign language is different. We cannot break it down as easily and a teacher must have a certain level of understanding and communication in the language. I think that the report set that at the level of higher or SCQF level 6.

The pedagogy can certainly be given to the teacher, depending on the standard that we expect of our teachers. On my earlier point about the linguistic competence of those in other European countries, many of them do not have particularly high qualifications in English, but they have a degree of understanding that could be similar to our level 6. I think that we would want to aim for that kind of level.

The master's degree is a long-term aspiration. We in the General Teaching Council for Scotland are looking to ensure that the courses that teachers use in teacher education provide opportunities for master's credits. Courses that are emerging as a result of the Donaldson report, which members will have heard a lot about in the Education and Culture Committee, are beginning to look at degrees of specialism, which are specialist components on top of the generalist requirements. It is perfectly feasible that there could be components of specialism in modern languages that could be accredited to master's level and help to fill the envelope to which Clare Adamson referred.

**The Deputy Convener:** I am conscious of the time, but I will try to allow committee members to ask more questions.

**Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** My question has to do with some of the previous witnesses' submissions to us. They suggest that we could benefit from the involvement of parents in teaching languages in schools, particularly in light of the challenges of not having teaching expertise in that regard. We also had feedback from the convener from a visit to Dalmarnock primary school—I think that Clare Adamson was there as well—about the involvement of the community there. How can we get communities and parents much more involved in encouraging children to learn languages at school? Perhaps you could cite examples in that regard other than the splendid one of Dalmarnock primary.

**Jeanna Brady:** At one time, our primary school in Edinburgh had 50 different nations represented in its pupils. Most of the students from other nations were bilingual students, and bilingualism is

a huge advantage in itself. However, many other schools in Scotland have children coming in whose first language is not English, which is a challenge. In that situation, the school must work closely with the parents, but the parents often do not have English either. It tends to be the children who are the communication link between the school and the home.

The support of parents is key for children whose first language is not English and for children whose first language is English—there are two different components in that regard. Parents have a key role for children whose first language is not English. That role is effective, but the Scottish Parent Teacher Council is clear that qualified practitioners need to be in place in schools to teach languages, and a qualified person is required in the classroom if parents are to help out at home or in other places with homework.

**Richard Tallaron:** I agree with that, but involving the community is important, and it is easy. Perhaps it is not so important in the teaching of language, but it is important for the cultural element. I am a French person, my children go to the local primary school, and I am regularly invited to go there to speak about France to primary 1 or primary 6 pupils, although not necessarily in French.

In Melrose primary school in the Borders, we are running a project that different communities are involved in. We have invited parents and the community to join in a sports day. Some people will bring food from their own country that they have prepared, and we will celebrate languages at a cultural level. Involving the community is important and of value. Let us value people who come to Scotland and who can share their culture and language with us.

**Tony Finn:** I agree with that. It would be hypocritical of me not to support that approach, as I have done the reverse in France, but it is important to recognise the distinction between the assistance that a member of the language community can bring both culturally and contextually and the teacher's work. The teacher needs to understand the pedagogical context and must have the language qualification. The community can bring something that supplements that knowledge and assists the teacher, but does not replace the teacher.

**Iain Ellis:** I totally agree with what everybody is saying. We should not rely on parents to do what should basically be the teacher's job. It is a matter of working together. I cannot mention any school off hand, but some schools are spectacular at that and fully use parents working alongside teachers, while quite a lot of schools do not do that but could do it. There is scope to get parents more involved, but that is another issue.

**Tony Finn:** Helen Eadie asked for examples. I am aware of schools that have brought in French restaurant owners to work with home economics teachers, rather than just in a modern languages class. I am also aware of schools that have brought in football players from other European countries to work in the language class—they sometimes found that challenging, and one can imagine why; their understanding of the language that was being communicated would be very different from what was communicated—and with physical education staff and others. Cultural additionality is important, but we need to understand its boundaries.

**Helen Eadie:** Is that approach used in other countries? If it is, what level of success has there been? We have heard about classes interacting with classes elsewhere in the country and in other countries. That is potentially exciting, not only for little children learning, but for adults. I can imagine that a room with computers and access to Skype, for example, offers all kinds of possibilities to communities. Will you comment on that?

**Richard Tallaron:** Obviously, I can talk about France. English is the language that is taught in 99.9 per cent of French primary schools. Sadly, primary schools in France do not tend to involve their community, but people in France are now really trying to push the information and communication technology side of things and are keen to find English-speaking partners. I have said this before, but we now have a chance in Scottish schools to link up with French schools. People in France are getting access to computers and the internet. In Scotland, we are ahead of the game by perhaps six or seven years at least in computers and equipment, but the rest of Europe is catching up with us, and people there want English-speaking partners, which is wonderful.

**Tom Hamilton:** The University of Dundee is delivering, in English, a version of its undergraduate teacher education programme for primary to Greek students in Athens. When I recently visited one of the Greek schools that is involved in that with University of Dundee staff, I found that a lot of the instruction was being carried out in English.

Coming back to the point about cultural involvement, I note that when the school decided to establish a football academy it went to Italy and forged a link with Juventus, of all teams, because it did not want any partisanship from Greek football supporters in Athens. Now staff from Juventus are working with those kids. That is really quite European. These days, Greece might not offer the best examples when we think about European moves, but I found that to be a positive way of integrating certain different elements.

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** Coming back to the issue of funding and resources, I have to say that, having sat through a number of evidence sessions as a committee member, witnesses' comments have been very positive. However, the evidence from Ms Brady and Mr Ellis has been perhaps the least optimistic that we have heard; indeed, Ms Brady has expressed grave concerns about the situation. What do you mean by that? After all, we are not starting with a blank sheet; primary schools in Scotland are already carrying out good work on modern languages. Are you concerned about the future? For example, Ms Brady, you expressed concern about the transition from primary to secondary, but are you more concerned about that through-process or that the whole system in primary education will just not be doable with the allocated funding?

**Jeanna Brady:** It is a bit of both. On the latter question, in primary schools, it all depends on individual headteachers championing such moves. As Tony Finn suggested, if a headteacher moves on, that particularly valuable resource moves with them and they leave a gap or void. With language teaching in schools, there is inconsistency not only between local authorities, but between the schools in one local authority area. However, dealing with that is not necessarily about resources; it can be about the championing of language teaching in a school or authority, and sometimes it is a matter of teaching methodologies and the work in the classroom.

Our authority's budget has been completely slashed, as has happened in many authorities. As you suggest, there are good initiatives and, somewhere down the line, our elected members and officers will want to examine the positive gains from them. However, even though the benefits will not be seen until way down the line, the fact is that we sometimes need the sort of seed-corn funding that the Government's initiative is providing. Significant resources should be put into the good initiatives, which should be championed not only at Government level, but by senior managers in local authorities such as directors of education. We need resources for and commitment to these things.

As for the sustainability of such initiatives, I think that we need to make a leap of faith and put adequate resources into the profession and into schools in Scotland. I am perhaps not being very clear, but my point is that given the scale of the exercise the approach is much more achievable in primary schools, whereas sustaining it in high schools requires a completely different mindset as well as resources and commitment.

**Willie Coffey:** Are you saying that we need to fund that now or later?

**Jeanna Brady:** I have children in primary and secondary education, and our high school favours a more traditional route, with broad subject choices all the way through to highers. That is not the case in all schools in Scotland. When children are faced with the choice early on—and perhaps when they see the employment situation just now—they might choose subjects that they think might give them a future either at university or in employment and so drop languages, music and all the other rich arts subjects. As has been evidenced across Scotland, the structure and organisation of schools can determine young people's subject choices.

I believe that Iain Ellis might have a Scottish perspective on the issue.

09:45

**Iain Ellis:** I know where Mr Coffey is coming from with regard to funding but, as we have said, tremendous work is going on in some primary schools while in others nothing at all is happening. It is all down to the good will of teachers. We cannot say that there is a full structure in place; some schools have wonderful structures and are carrying out tremendous work, but the current playing field is not level. Even within authorities, spectacular things will be going on in one primary school but will be non-existent in another. The difficulty is in ensuring that these things happen across the board.

Learning a language is a tremendous thing for children. If my son, who will be moving into secondary school in the summer, does not come out with a language in five or six years' time, he will be disadvantaged. The fact is that a lot of kids are not taking languages at secondary school, but if we get that sort of learning embedded in primary school it will change the culture. They will take the language on and will want to learn it at secondary school.

My desperate plea is that if we are going to do this we should do it right—and in order to do it right it needs to be sustained. I am sorry—I am just passionate about the issue and I think that the current situation is disadvantaging our kids. Richard Tallaron is French; most French kids speak English, but most of our kids do not speak French or some other language and our biggest concern is, as I have suggested, that they are going to be disadvantaged. That is why we have mentioned the need for more money. I know that we are going through a very hard time and I do not like saying this, but I think that funding needs to be ring fenced. As soon as you mention ring fencing to politicians, they start to back off, but my biggest worry is that at the minute—I hate to say this, but I will just use the language that I always use—we are just playing at this. Three or four years down

the road, when directors of education have to make hard decisions about budgets, will they see languages as easy to cut? That is why we are asking whether the current approach is sustainable. It has to be for our children's sake. I would love to come back in five years and tell you that everything is working perfectly, because I think that a second language is the best start in life that we can give our children.

**Helen Eadie:** Funding is, of course, important. The directors of education might be able to answer my next question, which is about the European aspect. I cannot remember who it was, but someone said at the beginning of the meeting that we are going to need two to three times the amount that the Scottish Government proposes if we are to deliver the provision. The question is whether we are drawing down European funding as well as we might be.

It was not about this specific aspect of education, but the committee has heard evidence that, globally, we are not drawing down nearly as much money as we could be. How can we improve that situation, at least for the education sector? If we could match funding pound for pound, we could get double the amount that we are getting at the moment; indeed, we might even get three times that amount. I think that instead of blaming the Government—and I say this as an Opposition member who is no big fan of the Government—we need to work much harder at getting the money that is available in Europe to deliver some of the provision. We are just not good at that at the moment.

**Iain Ellis:** I know that I have been down on the amount of money that is being allocated, but the bottom line is that any money is better than no money.

**Helen Eadie:** Absolutely.

**Iain Ellis:** I have to say, though, that I do not know how match funding works. Richard Tallaron might be better placed to answer that question.

**Richard Tallaron:** Mr Coffey is right that we are not starting from scratch in Scotland. Having visited many primary schools around the country, I do not think that any primary school in Scotland does not teach a language at least from P6 onwards. That is a big advantage and provides a solid base. The one-plus-two model is exciting, but the important point is that, as I have said, we are not starting from scratch.

We could use EU money more in Scotland. When we started national courses in France and Spain 10 years ago, five to 10 teachers from Scotland used to apply for a grant to go abroad. The British Council had so much money that it could not spend its budget by the end of each year, which was incredible. Now, through my

organisation and others, we have more Scottish teachers, but there is still money out there. We could run more courses abroad and create exchange programmes. Tony Finn and I are involved in a European radio programme—that is where I met Tony for the first time—which involves four or five primary schools and one secondary school in a local authority in Scotland, with the same set-up on the other side. It costs nothing to us here in Scotland, but it means that hundreds of pupils can start exchanging.

**Helen Eadie:** What do we need to do to get that money? What is preventing us from getting it?

**Richard Tallaron:** It is about passing on the information to schools. That is crucial.

**Helen Eadie:** Who is not passing on that information?

**Tony Finn:** I am not even sure that things are that simple. We are trying to address a deeper cultural problem through the initiative. At the moment, organisations such as Richard Tallaron's and some local authorities are particularly good at getting European funding and others are not. Some other countries access European funding more readily than we do, but we are quite well provided for by parts of the European budget in other parts of education. Perhaps this is an area in which there is scope for us to develop, and the committee might want to ask Neil Logue and colleagues from local authorities about that in the next evidence session.

I think that we are in this situation partly because of the culture. For example, countless people in European countries want to come and take part in exchanges and visits to Scotland, but there is not proportionately the same number of Scottish teachers who want to take part in visits going the other way. We are trying to change that culture and, hopefully, as we do so, we will be able to take advantage of developing EU funds. For example, the Comenius funding is changing and opening up new opportunities and possibilities, and this is the best time to look at that.

**Helen Eadie:** That is helpful. Thank you.

**Tom Hamilton:** I will add to that, if I may. Under the Comenius umbrella is a project called the transversal programme, which will be part of the changes. It funds visits by teachers, local authority officials and people in the system who are moving education forward. Every couple of years for the past few years, the GTC has hosted a visit for people from all over Europe who have come to look at what is going on in Scottish education and the GTC.

However, there is an issue with the number of people from Scotland using transversal funds to go to other places for study visits. Money is left in

the budget every year. Not enough people are taking up that opportunity. That might be partly about communications and people not knowing that the programme is available, although we have done our bit to publicise transversal. The other difficulty—and it is a genuine difficulty—is that people are so involved in the day to day running of their particular job that they find it hard to get permission to go or they find it hard to leave their responsibilities and go abroad, even though it would be refreshing and interesting, and they would come back with good ideas that could be used for the benefit of Scottish education.

**Helen Eadie:** If a team of people across education in Scotland, local authorities and organisations such as yours and others had a focused working group on that issue, would it really be able to get into it? We should not just blame the Government for not having the right priorities. We should try to double the money that the Government has at the moment to help. I think that everyone round the table is converted to the idea that that is the right thing to do. We need to get double or treble the amount of money. The challenge to the witnesses is: can you go out there and work collectively to help the Government and our children to get that money to do the exchange work that we need to do?

**Richard Tallaron:** Yes, and I have submitted that proposal to a group called COALA—cultural organisations and local authorities. In October, we spoke about how we can improve things. There is money and opportunity out there, so how can we help? Perhaps the next step will be to create an action group; that is a good idea.

**The Deputy Convener:** Various different concerns—perhaps that is too strong a word; “issues” might be better—have been raised today. That is welcome. The points that Jeanna Brady and Iain Ellis made about resources are valid. They are right to say that we need to be more focused on where we are just now.

We have talked about the good will that exists and have said that we want to use parents and the community. We have said that we want classroom assistants to be qualified, and we have discussed the question of whether, if they are qualified, they become teachers. Other issues that have been raised are the twinning of schools across Europe and training teachers in languages.

I do not believe that any one of those initiatives is free. There is a cost implication in everything that we are discussing, and it is only reasonable that we try to identify and quantify that cost. Helen Eadie's point was good. We need to work as a team in order to identify additional resources. People say that not enough is being spent, but no one has said how much would be enough. That is an important element that we need to grapple with.

There are schools that have no language provision and there are schools that offer more than one language. Although we should congratulate the schools that have been successful, we must also support the ones that have not been. Twinning is probably a good idea.

The chief executives before us, in particular, will know the resource implications of the issue that we are discussing because they are experienced in delivering services. How much extra resource would be needed to ensure that, when we deliver the services, we do so meaningfully and successfully?

**Tony Finn:** That is a difficult question. I come from a local authority background and I was a secondary school headteacher, but the job that I do in the GTCS is not about spending the resources that are provided by Government. I was on the Scottish Government languages working group, and its view was that the £4 million that was allocated to support language learning should be doubled or tripled. That was an indicative figure, and I would not pretend that it was based on a scientific analysis of the likely needs. However, it embodied an expectation that would lead to on-going discussion with Government and—as Helen Eadie has pointed out—other agencies from which funding could come.

That figure is the best answer that I can give to your question. Anything else that I said would be a personal opinion based on my previous experience. However, as I am here to represent the GTCS, it would probably be more than undiplomatic of me to give a direct answer. In short, though, there is a need for greater resources.

**Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** On the issue of the transition between primary school and secondary school, do you have any thoughts on how we can provide continuity?

**Tony Finn:** That is a difficult question. It relates to a question that has not been asked yet, which is that of which languages should be used. I will deal with that in passing—or en passant—en route to providing the answer to your question.

The issue is possibly one of the biggest practical difficulties that has faced clusters of schools. The working group wrestled with the problem and, in the end, we suggested that it was necessary to work with what we have rather than to plan for something that might occur in the near or long-term future.

We suggested that local clusters of primary and secondary schools should have a plan for the delivery of that continuity. There is an argument that doing Spanish in primary school gives someone an addition to their range of language competencies—it is one of the languages in the

one-plus-two model. However, if that person goes to a secondary school that does not offer Spanish, that can be a significant break in continuity. The delivery of that continuity will require some difficult choices. Schools will need to work together to decide which languages they are going to work to sustain. That might have implications for the languages that are offered in secondary school. In some cases, more languages might end up being offered; in other cases, there might be fewer.

10:00

When I was a principal teacher of modern languages, I had French, Spanish and German in one department, and large numbers of pupils went through those courses. Nowadays, some very big schools might offer something similar but, in some schools, languages are in decline. Further, the languages that are on offer are not the same across the country, which means that there is a problem when someone transfers from one part of the country to another.

In the end, the delivery of continuity must be down to careful local planning. I am not going to pretend that that is easy, because it is not.

**Iain Ellis:** That has hit the nail on the head. There is not much point in my child doing Spanish in primary if the secondary school does not offer it. If he does Spanish and French, and the secondary school does French—great, he is getting two languages. The schools must work in their clusters and deliver something that will be beneficial to the child and allow them to move on. A lot of parents feel that, first and foremost, children should do the same languages in secondary that they have done in primary. That would mean that the transition would be smooth, rather than being a stop followed by a start.

A lot of schools pay close attention to the transition period, and I would be surprised if they did not have continuity of languages.

**The Deputy Convener:** I thank our witnesses for participating. If I may say so, it has been educational. I am grateful for your honesty and clarity. You have been helpful.

10:02

*Meeting suspended.*

10:07

*On resuming—*

**The Deputy Convener:** I welcome Neil Logue, representative of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland; Ann Robertson, modern languages development officer, from the City of Edinburgh Council; Robert Nicol, chief officer, and

Councillor Douglas Chapman—who is someone that I recognise—spokesperson for education, children and young people, from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; and Janice Byers, curriculum for excellence support officer, from the Dumfries and Galloway Council.

To maximise our time, we move straight to questions.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Should all future primary school teachers have a languages qualification? If so, at what level should that qualification be? Is that proposal feasible? How long would it take to implement?

**Councillor Douglas Chapman (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities):** The answer to that was covered by respondents on the previous panel. From COSLA's and an employer's point of view, we would want people to come into the profession who are ready to deliver the curriculum in its entirety. As the GTCS representative said, having teachers who are geared up to deliver a modern language—whatever that language may be—and who have the capacity to manage the classroom situation will allow progress to be made.

Because of the situation that we are in, there are great strengths in the modern language sector. Nevertheless, we might find that there are gaps in the skills available when we conduct an audit of existing primary school teachers' skills. Rather than retrofitting skills to teachers who are already teaching, we will need a supply of teachers who are capable of delivering the curriculum in its entirety; in the same way that you would not expect teachers to come into a school and say, "I can deliver the whole curriculum, apart from numeracy", in the future teachers will be expected to deliver that element of modern language provision, too.

That is the journey that we are on, which has been kick-started by the one-plus-two model. We plan to deliver the programme over two parliamentary terms. We do not need it in place by this afternoon; it is a long-term game that we are considering. We hope that we can achieve those ambitions in our small country.

**Neil Logue (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland):** From a local authority perspective, it is important that the delivery of the curriculum is underpinned by a transparent strategy. There is an expectation that local authorities will move quickly to develop new language learning strategies. There is also an expectation regarding qualifications. As has been indicated, if an aspiring primary teacher does not have at the point of entry to a course the equivalent of a higher in a modern language, the expectation is that she or he will attain that

qualification in the course of their undergraduate studies. Obviously, that reflects unambiguous expectations about the capacity of the teacher education institution to deliver training to undergraduates who have entered a teacher training course without the equivalent of a higher in a modern language.

A societal question must be answered, and the answer would, obviously, go on to underpin an emerging national implementation strategy. If we prize not only the learning of foreign languages, but language learning, there are implications for the skills that we will seek in those professionals whom we would recruit to teach our children and young people. It is entirely reasonable to expect teachers to contribute significantly to the linguistic development of pupils in primary and secondary school.

Under the curriculum for excellence—which is badged as a transformational reform of the school curriculum—there is a professional expectation that all teachers, irrespective of their academic discipline, will support linguistic and numeracy developments and support young people on health and wellbeing. That is ambitious and challenging, but deliverable. If any of us needs reminding about how easy it is to learn a language, we simply have to walk into any Scottish school that has a significant proportion of Polish immigrants and observe how quickly the Polish pupils have acquired English.

As a passionate former modern linguist, I have always gone about demystifying the notion that learning a language is difficult. We have found ways—in this country and others—of making language learning difficult and not making it engaging enough. The challenge is whether we provide a learning landscape that is rich, engaging and nurturing not only for skills in a foreign language, but for skills in one's native language.

**Ann Robertson (City of Edinburgh Council):** The issue is about setting standards and expectations. It is not unrealistic for us to expect somebody to have a national level 5 qualification—the new qualification level—in modern languages before they go into initial teacher education.

We have to equip the teachers with the skills that they will need in order to be employed at the end of that process. If the expectation is that everybody will be delivering a modern language as part of the curriculum in primary schools, people will need to have the correct skills in place before that to be able to get a job at the end of their teacher education.

10:15

I agree with everything that Neil Logue has just said. I teach the modern languages in the primary school training in Edinburgh—I was teaching my French class last night—and there is a huge range of skills within one class. The skill level can range from somebody who did a French O grade in 1984, to somebody who is practically a fluent speaker, to somebody who has done a degree, to somebody who has next to no French but is very enthusiastic. You deal with that playing field when you do teacher education through the local authorities. Giving us a baseline standard for teachers would be helpful in taking the process forward.

**Janice Byers (Dumfries and Galloway Council):** I am from Dumfries and Galloway, which is a very rural area. Down there, we have different issues to address on modern languages because we do not have access to the cultural organisations and the more cosmopolitan aspects that there are in a city such as Edinburgh. We have had to harness new technologies in order to reach our teachers and develop new materials. Nevertheless, the standard cannot be allowed to be lower for our teachers simply because of those issues. We have to offer the same quality as a big city such as Edinburgh.

We are already compromised in the languages that we teach. We can support only one major language as the L2 language in the school and that is French. That is where our teachers have their strength. We are working to our strength and that is what we have to do. We realise that that is not ideal, and if more money is made available in developing the L3 language, we could perhaps start to branch out.

First, we need to get one thing done right, and that is our basic teacher education for those teachers. There is a huge disparity in what is delivered across Scotland at the moment. We know about that disparity through the local authority representatives who belong to the cultural organisations and local authorities, or Coala, group; we do not know what is happening with the other local authorities that are not represented on the group.

**Jamie McGrigor:** The written evidence from Mr Logue, on behalf of ADES, states on the role of languages in economic development:

“The actual choice of languages in a school context is not hugely important.”

That is fine, but the written evidence from City of Edinburgh Council, on page 18 of paper 2, includes evidence from the Confederation of British Industry education for skills and growth survey 2011. A diagram shows employer demand for foreign language skills in order of language,

with French at 61 per cent, German at 52 per cent, Spanish at 40 per cent, Polish at 29 per cent and so on, going the whole way down to the bottom with Korean at 9 per cent—perhaps with “Gangnam Style” that will go up now.

Are there any specific languages that children should be learning and why? I am a parent, and as a parent I would probably want the language that is learnt to be important to my child’s future. You say in your written evidence:

“The actual choice of languages in a school context is not hugely important.”

Do you want to expand on that?

**Neil Logue:** Absolutely. The fundamental argument is that it is much more important through school education to instil and nurture in children and young people the appropriate range of skills—we have already been saying that in terms of taking forward the reform of the curriculum through curriculum for excellence. The mantra “skills for life, skills for learning and skills for work” is frequently used.

A finite range of languages is available across Scottish schools. I was the ADES representative on the working group and the working group report makes it absolutely clear that of course, in the immediate and medium term, we will continue to have a major emphasis on the languages of our European neighbours—French, Spanish, German and Italian.

The working group received a lot of evidence and it mulled over a lot of research activity. From a purely economic point of view, it is clear that there is a macroeconomic interest in society across Scotland and the UK having the linguistic skills to engage effectively and in a rewarding way with emerging strong economies. Brazil and Portuguese are mentioned frequently in that context. I happen to be a speaker of Portuguese. I would speculate that there are probably only 20 or 30 other native Scots in Scotland who are Portuguese speakers. I am ashamed to say that I do not know whether my alma mater—the University of Glasgow—still delivers courses in Portuguese.

It is fanciful to have an ambition for languages that is plucked out of the sky without first attending to the need to create the necessary infrastructure, capacity and expertise. That is why the implementation strategy must provide a clear indication of the various way stages—the small steps that will become slightly bigger steps—and must create an infrastructure that supports the ambition. Therefore, the necessary language training and language teaching capacity must be acquired through teacher education for undergraduates who, in the first instance, might

not want to be teachers and through teacher education courses specifically.

A former colleague of mine who gave evidence to the committee in January, Dan Tierney, reiterated the need to be clear sighted about what the objective is. To go back to what I said earlier, for me, as a linguist, the objective should be much more about giving children the skills that enable them to be confident, fearless, encouraged and motivated to tackle or acquire a language—as we said in the ADES submission—

“as and when personal or professional circumstances demand.”

In a sense, it does not matter whether a child leaves a Scottish school with a confident grasp of Spanish, Italian or French; what matters is that they will have acquired skills that will serve them well as they move on to another language.

One of my children is a mechanical engineer who works globally. He is, perforce, learning a bit of Azerbaijani, not because he wants to sing in the next Eurovision song contest, but because his company does a lot of work in Baku. He was relatively timid when it came to learning languages, but given his father's interest and demeanour, he was eventually conscripted into believing that languages were important. Language ability must be seen and valued as an important life skill and—across a range of occupations—as an important ancillary skill that might be called into use.

Of course, there are other justifications for speaking languages. I get a great kick from being able to speak to a farmer in north-west Portugal or south-east Spain. That gives me immense personal satisfaction. Somehow or other, we need to convince pupils to open their minds and their eyes, to widen their horizons and to raise their ambitions and expectations, and thereby change the learning as well as the teaching landscape.

I hope that that answers Mr McGrigor's question.

**The Deputy Convener:** You have used a lot of buzz words and fine language, but you have not told us how we will get to where we want to go. What is your view on how we will get there?

**Neil Logue:** I was asked whether I thought that particular languages were important and, if so, which languages those were. I indicated that, in a national strategy, it is important to have clear way stages and to build incrementally from one way stage to another. If we are serious about transforming language learning as never before, we must identify where we want to be in one year's time or two years' time. In Scotland, we have been here before—we were here in 1989.

If we are serious about transforming the language learning landscape, we need to grow capacity and expertise in universities and teacher education institutions, and encourage joined-up thinking across Government and local authorities, and across local authorities themselves about what is important and what concrete action each authority can take. Times are hard and are going to get harder, so it is important for authorities to work together as well as working with the university sector and cultural organisations. That is hinted at in the working group's report.

I do not have all the answers, as you might gather. I have the dream but I have had that for 20-odd years.

**The Deputy Convener:** You have come close.

**Clare Adamson:** I have a quick supplementary question on that area. Professor Tierney was very focused on the language selection issue. We have also had a lot of evidence about the change in learning behaviour and in the brain in connection with the age at which we start to teach children. We heard from Ian Ellis that he thinks that there is no point in a child doing a language at primary school if they cannot do it at secondary school. I am just looking for a bit of clarification. Even if that articulation cannot be continued in secondary school, the change in the child's learning capacity and the way in which their brain can deal with languages are such that the one-plus-two model stands on its own.

**Neil Logue:** I agree with you. Continuity, progression and sustaining engagement with an individual language would be ideal. As a former professor and linguist, I am not, however, overly depressed by the possibility that that might not happen sometimes. As I have already explained, and as you have eloquently said, it is much more important that young people acquire the transferable skills of learning a language.

In my own experience, at secondary school I started learning Italian, then in third year I moved to a school that did not do Italian, so I started Spanish. The plasticity of a young child's brain is such that young children do not ask themselves whether something is difficult; they simply pick up a language. Somehow or other, despite our best efforts, we have managed to instil in people a lack of confidence about learning languages, and we must reverse that mindset and environment or landscape.

**Roderick Campbell:** Could Councillor Chapman comment a little more on the question of ring fencing local government resources for spending on such projects? In your written submission, you say that COSLA does not support ring fencing. In our earlier session we talked about continuity and transition, and from where I sit, ring

fencing would seem to have some advantages in this area. Would you like to comment further on that issue?

**Councillor Chapman:** We welcomed the removal of ring fencing from local authority funding in general. As currently pursued, the policy on languages focuses a great deal on modern languages. I know that Mr Malik was looking for some kind of magic bullet that would allow us to say, "If we do this, all will be delivered," but there is a wide range of different strategies that local authorities have to adopt to deliver such a programme successfully.

The Government has already said that it supports the pilot and will follow it with £4 million in this financial year to support languages. That is the kind of approach that we want to see but there needs to be a total package for local government. There will be sufficient momentum and emphasis behind the policy to make sure that every local authority across Scotland puts a greater emphasis on the teaching of modern languages. At the same time, there is also an emphasis on science, maths and literacy, so the picture is fairly complex.

We would not want ring fencing to be reintroduced but, at the same time, the Government's policy is such that we would be obliged to follow its guidance and put as much effort into extending the teaching of modern languages as we possibly can.

10:30

**Willie Coffey:** On the transition between primary and secondary, we can envisage a load of our youngsters leaving their primary schools with a smattering of Spanish, Mandarin or French—or even Catalan, if the kid wants to play for Barcelona. However, I think that Neil Logue's point was echoed by one of our previous witnesses, Luca Tomasi, who seemed to suggest that it does not matter what languages are involved as long as youngsters have at least one language, or even a couple. Do you agree with that view?

Secondly, with regard to local authorities' preparedness for curriculum for excellence, their flexibility and so on, I want to return to Neil Logue's point about mechanical engineering and science. Are the youngsters who are studying science and engineering aware that they should think about combining those subjects with a language? Moreover, are the local authorities ready enough to offer that through curriculum for excellence?

**Ann Robertson:** On your last question, local authorities' readiness stems from the top-down commitment that they made a few years ago with the introduction of curriculum for excellence. I think that I am right in saying that the level of

readiness very much varies across the country, but I can really only talk about the City of Edinburgh Council, where one of the big differences has been having me in post—not because of who I am, but because of the commitment that it demonstrated in having a dedicated languages person to co-ordinate and lead modern languages for the council. That is not the case across Scotland.

I am sorry—what were your other questions?

**Willie Coffey:** Do we need to replicate in secondary school the languages that are being learned in primary? After all, we cannot realistically expect every secondary school to deliver every language.

**Ann Robertson:** This comes back to a particular local authority's geography. Edinburgh is very well placed as far as the geography of its clusters is concerned and, across the city, the cluster approach has been embedded to ensure that the secondary school and its associated primaries agree which language or languages—it might indeed be more than one language—are being delivered. For example, a rolling programme of French and German might be continued into secondary level.

That approach does not necessarily follow through if, as often happens, a pupil from outwith a cluster joins the secondary school in his or her first year. However, secondary schools also have a responsibility to put something in place for pupils who might not have done the language in question. Although the approach is now embedded across the city, I do not think that that is the case across the whole of Scotland.

I echo Neil Logue's point about the crucial experience of language learning and giving our learners the skills to become language learners all their lives rather than simply at school. As for the question about progression, although I certainly think it preferable to have continuity and progression rather than interruption, it is not always possible to avoid that.

**Janice Byers:** The language that is largely taught in Dumfries and Galloway schools is French. There are also four schools that teach German, but we heard just this week that the secondary school is no longer going to offer German in S1. As a result, the ideal scenario of pupils continuing to learn the language from primary school through to the end of their broad general education will not happen. The decision has come down to two headteachers, one of whom will not change the provision while the other does not want to offer the language. We are going to come up against that sort of thing, but those headteachers will have to resolve the situation

themselves. I do not really think that we can insist on anything.

The “Building the Curriculum” series of documents makes it quite clear that in curriculum for excellence the main language learned from P1, if that happens, or P6 onwards—it is called the L2 language—should be carried on to the end of the broad general education phase. Indeed, my understanding is that that is what Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education expects as well.

**Neil Logue:** I confirm that I agree with myself.

**The Deputy Convener:** That is unusual.

**Neil Logue:** It is unusual, for those who know me.

Although philosophically I believe that ultimately it matters not which language is studied, of course from a practical point of view, as a local authority director of education, I would move heaven and earth to ensure that continuity and progression were made possible. However, as the committee has been advised by previous witnesses, discontinuity has been a frequent feature, largely due to the movement of teachers. Over a matter of weeks, a school can find itself losing, say, two Spanish teachers and not being able to recruit replacements.

The only way to obviate the difficulties or challenges around continuity is for an authority to provide a strategy—it has to come from a strategy, rather than from incidental discussions involving only individual headteachers—that is designed to make sure that there is a broadly equipped language teaching workforce. In essence, that would mean that, in the case of a teacher who was a modern languages graduate in only one language, everything possible was done by the authority to support and encourage them to acquire another language through further study, as part of their contractual professional learning. We will have to vigorously and seriously pursue that approach across Scotland if we are to begin to have the capacity to sustain a commitment to progression and continuity.

Likewise, from a national perspective on planning the teacher workforce of the future, the training of aspiring primary teachers has to be carefully considered so that we get the right diversified balance across the languages that Scottish society prizes and wants to be available for our children and young people.

**Councillor Chapman:** School clusters, which have been referred to, are important. The progression in curriculum for excellence is from three to 18, so we should look at the child’s educational experience in its entirety. I have no doubt that more schools will become more skilled in working in a more collegiate way across a

cluster, coming up with a strategy for modern languages or whatever other subjects they want to develop. How will clusters start to make arrangements now for teachers who will retire in two or three years’ time? How will they cover some of the difficulties that that might bring? As has been said, we do not have the fully skilled workforce required to deliver the whole curriculum across all primaries.

Willie Coffey made an important point about whether that approach should involve other spheres of the curriculum, such as science and engineering. The CBI has often complained that not enough children leave school with sufficient language skills. We have been talking about the involvement of others—perhaps that could be brought into the classroom.

In my area there are quite a lot of heavy engineering companies. They look for German language skills, because their main markets tend to be in German-speaking countries. It would be fantastic if some of their employees gave up a little bit of their time to come into schools to explain a little about not just engineering but the fact that they need to go to Munich or wherever and explain their ideas in German or in pidgin English.

There is a lot of scope for flexibility, but the issue is about what happens on the ground. We cannot allow ad hoc decisions to drive the policy; there needs to be a definite strategy that each cluster adopts. The idea of there being support from the very top in the education authority is very important as well. There needs to be a great sense of direction of where we are going with this.

**The Deputy Convener:** You have just heard about four primary schools that offer a language that is not offered by the secondary school that is in the same cluster. That is very unhelpful at best.

My first question is whether, given your expertise, you think that the council can intervene in such issues. Can the chief executive or director of education intervene to try to assist the schools to overcome that difficulty?

Secondly, how many language periods do we expect our children to do in primary schools? What will have to give to allow that to happen? So far, no one has mentioned what will have to give to allow language teaching to take place.

**Councillor Chapman:** My response to your first question is that, obviously, that is down to the individual local authority, which is probably the answer that you expected. I go back to my point that there needs to be an overarching strategy in the local authority that says what the important steps are that need to be taken in developing modern languages teaching and ensuring that, when children move between primary and secondary school, the transition is as smooth as

can possibly be managed, given the resources that are available.

I am sorry, but could you run your second question past me again?

**The Deputy Convener:** It was about when languages are undertaken. Currently, many schools do not do any languages at all. If we expect schools to teach languages for two or four periods a week, what will have to give so that that can happen?

**Councillor Chapman:** Perhaps Neil Logue and the other members of the panel are in a better position to explain that, but my understanding is that the more that languages can be embedded as part of the normal school day, the better. I refer to the experiences of those who visited Dalmarnock primary school—and I know that Mr Campbell has been out to see schools in Fife—where there is a sense of fun in learning languages in the school day. We sometimes forget that many young people, especially young people in primary school, find that learning languages is really enjoyable and that they get a great sense of achievement from doing so. There is no reason why other elements of the curriculum—perhaps mathematics, for example—cannot be taught using a foreign language. I suppose that that would also bring a certain enjoyment level to the lesson.

**Janice Byers:** I can tell members what we do in our region, if that would help. We have recommended that there should be 45 minutes to an hour per week for a P6 or P7 class to progress in the language, but the language should be integrated in the wider curriculum wherever possible. For example, where possible, the language should be integrated in maths or history work, and particularly in English language work, where links are constantly made. Again, that takes a measure of skill from the primary teacher, and not all primary teachers are able to do that at this juncture. However, we look for 45 minutes to an hour every week, although things get in the way of that, obviously.

Does Ann Robertson agree with that?

**Ann Robertson:** Yes. Currently, there are no time allocations for modern languages in curriculum for excellence. With the five to 14 curriculum, the allocation worked out at roughly 45 minutes to an hour a week in P6 and P7. Pupils are now entitled to have modern languages from P6 onwards, until the end of S3, and that is pretty much embedded across the city. There are pockets where that does not happen as well as it should; at the other extreme, there are places where that happens from primary 1. As Janice Byers said, there is a mixture of the idea of a time allocation and the idea of encouraging schools to embed the language as much as possible.

The teaching of different curricular areas in a foreign language has been mentioned. When we look at that, we are looking at an immersion approach to learning. We must be realistic about what we are able to achieve given the timescales and the funding that we have. We will not get to the stage at which over the next seven years we will have fluent speakers who can deliver history lessons in French, for example, but simple daily routines, such as songs at the start of the day, can be embedded. Language can be embedded in the daily routine and daily life of the school. I think that we are going in that direction in our strategy in Edinburgh.

10:45

On the idea of time allocations, there is currently a bit of an issue with primary 7 in many schools. What you tend to hear from many primary teachers—if I had £1 for every time that I heard this, I would be well off—is that there is just no time in primary 7. In primary 7, the curriculum is very busy and there are a lot of transition activities. There are also things such as cycling proficiency, so the children tend to be out of class quite a lot. For whatever reason, modern languages seem to be the first thing to go to make room for those other areas. Quite often when we are talking about time allocations for modern languages, we are talking about time allocations in inverted commas.

As a first stage in implementing the one-plus-two model, we are encouraging people to look at a phased approach that would start in primary 5 and which would bring modern languages into line with the other curricular areas, whereby people work on level 2 experiences and outcomes under curriculum for excellence from primary 5 through to primary 7. I think that that would give us a good starting point. If we could work towards that, that would allow us a bit more robustness and rigour compared to the language input that is provided at the moment.

**The Deputy Convener:** Would it be helpful if all schools throughout Scotland were given a timeframe that allocated minimum times for language learning? That might take away the guesswork for many authorities.

**Neil Logue:** That is the position that used to prevail. There used to be a clear timeframe or time allocation for every area of the curriculum, but the inspectorate and Learning and Teaching Scotland—both those bodies are now part of the new organisation, Education Scotland—moved away from that. As the ADES submission points out, the curriculum in Scotland prescribes time allocations for only two subjects, which are physical education and religious and moral education.

Going back to your question, I think that the issue is not about what would be lost or need to be moved. Where children are not experiencing a foreign language at the moment, it is reasonable to surmise, given the ambitions for language learning, that the curriculum is currently insufficiently broad and rich. By giving them a language, we will be increasing the richness of their experience as learners. Although I am a director of education, if I were a teacher of languages in school, that is exactly what I would be saying to my headteacher to get as much time as possible for language learning.

The answers that colleagues have given about their experiences in primary echo the experience in my authority, which is Angus Council. It is worth while pointing out the importance of the languages working group's recommendation 6, which was that there should be regular planned exposure to language learning. The ambition or expectation is that the language experience should not come in one weekly dollop of 45 minutes or an hour but should be spread over two or three sessions a week. That would mean that it might be worth more than three times 10 or 20 minutes. One way of ensuring that there is regular exposure is to use the language for specific purposes by embedding it in the ways that my colleagues have described.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I want to pick up on what Janice Byers said about the practical problem that she faced when German teaching was not carried on into secondary school. That seems an important point. Rather than have local authority-wide strategies on language learning, ought we perhaps to have a national strategy? If so, how prescriptive should that national strategy be?

**Janice Byers:** I personally feel that headteachers need to be given strong guidance on that. Potentially, a few years down the line, we could be talking about seven years of learning a language suddenly stopping. Where children go into a group in which they are complete beginners, they will be put at a disadvantage in so many ways.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I can imagine that that would cause fury among pupils, parents and teachers.

**Janice Byers:** Even just now, there is a lot of fury going on. As things stand, headteachers in clusters are the ones who make the decision. In the cluster that I mentioned, it just so happened that the majority of schools learn French.

Interestingly, that cluster was taken as the model back in 1989, at the end of the first foray into modern language teaching in primary school. That model of German learning—from Annan in Dumfries and Galloway—was picked as the national model.

At the drop of a hat, as soon as support was pulled, the model switched to French. I think only four schools stayed with German, but we have now lost all but two. That is just a bit of side information, but it is worth bearing it in mind when looking at other things.

I agree that there must be strong guidelines, because the primary headteachers did not wish to change that situation. Indeed, it was a cluster arrangement, so why should they have had to change? However, the secondary head decided that there would be a change. There was no staffing reason for the change; it was just decided that it would happen. There is no advice on that situation, because it is a cluster decision. I do not know where we would go with such situations at this stage of the game.

**The Deputy Convener:** Thank you for sharing that with us. I am sure that there will be people who will try to support you on that one, but I do not want to make that the issue of this meeting.

**Roderick Campbell:** I have a question on a slightly different matter, which is about utilising people in the community. I note that the COSLA submission supports the idea of people in the community who speak foreign languages coming in and using them in the schools. I am not sure from Neil Logue's submission whether he takes that on board and whether he has costed the expansion of modern languages departments in universities that he said was required. Perhaps you could comment on that, Mr Logue.

**Neil Logue:** Without a major expansion in teaching and learning capacity in universities, we will not develop the teachers of the future who can deliver the ambitious strategy. Costings for such expansion will clearly have to be done by universities themselves. However, it strikes me that local authorities will be engaged with each of the 35 recommendations of the working group, including the recommendation that says that universities should work closely together. In essence, we are talking about the costs of recruiting linguists in universities who can deliver language teaching and provide language learning programmes to both standard university undergraduates and aspiring primary teachers.

If one wants to extend the range of languages available in Scotland's schools, the expansion will have to be even more diversified. It is ironic that although we have a welcome from a linguist's point of view for a new departure and a new set of ambitions for modern languages, university language departments are in decline. As the ADES paper states, language learning is extinct in the further education sector. Unless every part of the educational landscape and jigsaw work together through a national implementation approach or strategy, we will not push forward

effectively on the ambitions. Clearly, though, what universities need to do to expand their undergraduate provision and how they cost that is entirely a matter for them.

**Roderick Campbell:** What about utilising people in the community whose mother tongue is a foreign language? Are you in favour of that?

**Neil Logue:** As a local authority director of education and former linguist, I am in favour of pupils having as much quality exposure to another language as possible. In our authority, there is a lot of engagement with Polish parents, who volunteer and act in support of the language curriculum in a number of ways. As we heard from Richard Tallaron earlier, French nationals who live in this country frequently volunteer to support language learning.

However, it does not follow that because someone speaks a language they will necessarily be able to support children in learning that language in a school environment. It is absolutely crucial that there is a dual focus in the training and nurturing of expertise so that teachers are given both linguistic and pedagogical skills. You have to know how to teach a language in an engaging fashion and in ways that motivate young people. It does not necessarily follow that if you are a native speaker of a particular language you can excite young people or give them an appetite to learn that language, so there has to be a strong commitment to not only linguistic but pedagogical training.

**Clare Adamson:** A number of submissions raised the issue of funding; all that we have heard today about that has been the suggestion from the languages working group that funding should be twice or three times the amount that has been allocated. Of course, that is not much if you are talking about a grain of sand, but if you are talking about the volume of water in Loch Lomond, the difference becomes huge. Given the arbitrary nature of that suggestion, I wonder whether you know of any substantial financial analysis about the costs of implementation and on whether there is likely to be a shortfall.

**Neil Logue:** I am not aware that there is any such serious national exercise. I note that recommendation 24 of the languages working group report exhorts local authorities to undertake an audit, which would throw up the financial implications of implementing its recommendations.

It might be useful to run through the possible sources of costs. Unless they are being trained out of hours or during the holidays, the training of already practising teachers will incur backfill costs; releasing a teacher from a Scottish classroom for a full day costs a local authority, on average, £166 per day. Like the City of Edinburgh Council, in

Angus Council we have our own in-house modern languages in primary schools training programme. At the moment, 12 teachers are undertaking that training, the cost of which is £21,000 a year. That overall cost can be broken down into supply costs, venue costs, catering costs, trainer costs and the cost of input by a foreign-language assistant.

As we speak, there are in Scotland 69 foreign-language assistants—12 of whom are employed by Angus Council at roughly £8,000 per head or, say, £96,000 overall. Moreover, the annual cost, including on-costs, of releasing a teacher like Ann Robertson to support modern languages provision in Edinburgh, is £42,000. That is at the top of the teachers' scale. Those values can be multiplied in different ways according to need.

Different authorities will have different costs depending on where they are. I know that we are discussing provision in primary school, but given that in secondary education the national expectation is for 100 per cent uptake, if, over the past three years, the average uptake in a secondary school after second year has been 25 or 30 per cent the school in question will almost inevitably have to recruit more languages teachers to bridge the gap. That will not necessarily be a net cost to the authority because within the school's staffing entitlement the curriculum will be adjusted and, in taking on a languages teacher, the school might—here I must use heavy quotation marks—lose a teacher of what I will call, just in case anyone thinks I have an agenda, subject X.

Going back to the question of the costs that will and must fall to universities, I think that we also have to ask about the costs that they will have to meet to enhance in an appropriate and fit-for-purpose way their capacity to deliver the necessary training and the range of languages for which training is needed.

**Robert Nicol (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities):** On the question whether any financial analysis has been done, Neil Logue is right that there is no such body of work at the moment. However, in our discussions with the Scottish Government, it has committed to working up with us the on-going costs beyond next year. We have the agreement to £4 million funding for 2013-14, but beyond that there is not a figure that we can give for on-going costs. That has to be established and we have an agreement with the Scottish Government to establish that in detail.

11:00

**The Deputy Convener:** Thank you very much. I am sad to say that we have run out of time. Before we finish, I ask Douglas Chapman whether he can support Janice Byers by speaking to his

colleagues to see whether the difficulty can be overcome. If it can be successfully overcome, that will show that we can fix things in Scotland. I wish you luck.

I had not realised that Helen Eadie wanted to comment, so I will allow her a last question.

**Helen Eadie:** Thank you, convener. To continue with the funding issue, and following on from my earlier questions, I would like to hear views on the important general issue of funding from Europe. A previous written submission to the committee—which can be viewed by anyone online—said that there is a great dearth of information about that funding and who is claiming it or not claiming it. The bottom line, from information that has been available to date, appears to be that there is money to be claimed in Brussels for all areas of our life in Scotland, but we are simply not claiming it.

To me, languages seems to be a classic case. The European Commission, the Parliament and the Council of Ministers are all trying to promote languages. The funding is there, so how can we get all the professionals to work together, either at different levels or in one big working group? Dedicated time is needed to focus on drawing down that funding because it takes time to build up the necessary knowledge and expertise. We all know the saying, “Oh, someone else is doing it”, but if we leave it up to someone else, it turns out that no one does it, which is what has happened in Scotland.

**Ann Robertson:** That comes back to the point of having someone leading in modern languages locally, or on funding nationally. We have done quite a lot of work to promote the Comenius funding in Edinburgh, for example; I promote it through the MLPS training and through my primary networks across Edinburgh.

I have worked with Richard Tallaron to promote the French and Spanish immersion courses. This year we have 20 teachers signed up to do those courses through Le Francais en Ecosse, but there may be far more across the city whom we do not know of.

We are also planning a Comenius application to run a joint project with Madrid for one of our largest clusters in Edinburgh. That is a joint Spanish and English languages project to provide the MLPS training for the staff and to provide exchanges for the pupils.

We are accessing funding in different ways, but that is not to say that we are aware of everything that is out there. Where funding is not being accessed, it is because people are not aware of what is available.

**Councillor Chapman:** Maybe there is a stronger role for COSLA in the process. From my experience, Scotland or a Scottish local authority being one of the partners in a partnership agreement that is made to access European funding is seen as being a strong asset by other parts of the European Union.

We have a very active office at Scotland House in Brussels, so we could try to ensure that the available information is hammered home more enthusiastically across the range of local authorities that are perhaps not so involved, at the moment.

**Neil Logue:** Every authority has an external funding officer; those officers can work together. In addition, we are delighted that the Government has very quickly indicated its willingness to sit down with COSLA and ADES to discuss the resource implications of the ambitious commitment to change the language-learning landscape.

As I have hinted—if not actually said in my earlier contributions—given the fiscal challenges that all authorities in the country face, ADES is determined to ensure that authorities work together more closely than ever and pool our efforts, including on delivering training, which must include a consortium approach to securing whatever funding is out there.

**The Deputy Convener:** That is very helpful. The Government has overarching responsibility because it is championing the cause. The idea of COSLA getting involved is a good one and I am sure that our convener will be delighted to hear about the voluntary support that has been offered today.

It only remains for me to thank the panel for participating this morning. The meeting has been helpful and positive, and I hope that Janice Byers’s local issues can, as a matter of urgency, be resolved.

11:05

*Meeting suspended.*

11:07

*On resuming—*

**The Deputy Convener:** The next item is for Roderick Campbell to give the committee feedback from his visit to two schools. The floor is yours, Roderick.

**Roderick Campbell:** On Monday, I visited Balmerino primary school in the Howe of Fife. It is a small rural school. I was expecting to see some examples of French tuition, and we did see some, but it was in the nursery class. It was quite apparent that languages are being taught at

varying stages throughout the school. We saw P4 and P5 pupils doing some French, Spanish and some Mandarin. The children at that school all find Mandarin to be much more difficult than French, but they seem to be enjoying it and they have a very good teaching assistant, which is a benefit.

In the afternoon, we went on to visit Leuchars primary school, where the focus is very much on Mandarin. It is taught from primary 4, whereas French is started only in primary 6. We focused on those pupils, although I met a child in the pupil forum who does both. It was quite apparent that the children and the parents, whom we also met, are very enthusiastic about language tuition generally, and there is no resistance to Mandarin. Everyone seems to recognise its potential importance in the world, even if it is slightly more difficult to learn.

One of the things that came across was that there is a reasonably good approach to continuity. The school is in the Madras college cluster. Madras college is in St Andrews and places a lot of emphasis on teaching Mandarin as well as French. The issues that we have been touching on this morning about continuity and transition seem to be less of a problem in the schools that we visited in Fife.

I got the impression that the teaching of Mandarin depends on the individuals concerned. I think that I heard at questions yesterday that there are 13 teachers of Mandarin in Scotland.

Both of the schools that I visited have some criticisms of glow, the Scottish Government-supported intranet system. Neither thinks that it is particularly helpful, and each thinks that the use of technology to support language tuition is important, as is software that includes games. There is also strong recognition that language teaching could be used in other classes and not just in specific language classes. In other lessons, pupils could write names and dates in foreign languages and they could use language at sporting events and so on.

There is also a general recognition of the fact that early learning—the sooner, the better—is the best way to approach the teaching of languages. It has to be said, however, that in the younger groups, the teaching of Mandarin focuses on culture, history and songs. It is appreciated that Mandarin is quite a difficult language and the teachers do not overdo gaining familiarity with the symbols at the early stages—having looked at the language myself, I can understand that.

I was impressed by the enthusiasm, although I appreciate that that is what I would expect to see in schools that are keen on teaching languages. We did not visit schools in which language is of no real interest to the headteacher. We got a more

positive version of the situation from the schools that we visited. The visits were useful, all the same.

We met a set of parents of one girl who is fluent in Finnish and English at home, and she is also learning Mandarin. To someone from such a background, an appreciation of learning languages is a very easy sell.

**The Deputy Convener:** Thank you very much. Are there any questions?

**Helen Eadie:** I have a comment, convener. My office and I have made intensive efforts to visit a school in my constituency that teaches languages. Roderick Campbell's experience highlighted the fact that there is a difference between North East Fife—I am sure that Roderick Campbell would agree that it is the more affluent part of Fife, containing the university town—and the area that I represent. Members will know that that area contains towns and villages that are among the most disadvantaged in all Scotland.

Teachers in those schools say to me that the curriculum for excellence has been so challenging for them that they have not had the time to commit to such programmes. I am not able to comment on that because I do not have the knowledge and experience, but it is interesting to note that. It means that children who go to school in the more disadvantaged parts of Scotland are suffering and some special thought needs to be given to that point.

**Roderick Campbell:** The local authority is the same in both areas. I appreciate that socioeconomic standards and levels of deprivation vary considerably in Fife. When we are talking about proceeding with this scheme but leaving it to local circumstances, I wonder how that will work in practice unless there are some pretty strong guidelines from on high.

**Helen Eadie:** That is why I support some of the comments from witnesses today that there has to be a national strategy with strong guidance, although we are not at the point of coming to a conclusion, as we still have more witnesses to hear from. It is certainly the opinion that I am beginning to form, because it seems that all sorts of problems are emerging.

**The Deputy Convener:** I think that they are challenges rather than problems. I am not sure that anyone has presented us with a challenge that we cannot overcome—hopefully we will overcome those challenges. Thank you very much for that report. Can we note that report?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## “Brussels Bulletin”

11:15

**The Deputy Convener:** Item 3 is the “Brussels Bulletin”, which Ian Duncan will talk us through.

**Ian Duncan (Clerk and European Officer):** I will be brief. There are a couple of things to draw your attention to before I turn to the main issue. Tomorrow, there is an event on EU funding that may be of interest to some of the committee members. The details are near the end of the bulletin—it is on 22 February at the Grand Central hotel in Glasgow.

The first million-signature petition has been received. It touches on the “water is a human right” initiative. Members might remember that it was expected that the first petition would be one concerning the two homes of the European Parliament but, because of various rule adjustments, that petition has not managed to meet the criteria yet.

The big issue this week is, of course, the multi-annual financial framework. The headline figure has gone down, which is the first ever reduction in the overall EU budget. In the annex at the back of the bulletin, I have given a full breakdown of the figures. I have also put in how the budget itself has evolved. You will see the current budget covering 2007 to 2013 and then, as you go across the page, you will see each of the attempts to secure agreement until you get to the final deal.

It is important to note that that final deal is between the member states—the European Parliament is not yet involved. I draw your attention to the joint letter written by the four leaders of the groups of the European Parliament, who are clearly not happy—full stop. They do not believe that it is a good deal at all and, given that the European Parliament itself must affirm the deal, they hold quite a strong negotiating position to try to secure an adjustment.

I draw your attention to a couple of things within the document. Trying to compare the final deal with the current levels is not very helpful. Instead, it is sometimes useful to look at the difference between the current outcome and the earlier proposals. The connecting Europe facility is of concern to several committee members. Although that has gone up by 140 per cent from the current allocation, it has received a cut of nearly 30 per cent compared with the first proposal. Broadband has been an issue for Willie Coffey and Jamie McGrigor and the budget for that has gone down by 86 per cent compared with the first proposal.

You begin to see where some of the deals have been done to cut things out in order to ring fence

what were deemed to be the important things—the agricultural funding and the broader cohesion structural funding. There has been a lot of give in the areas in which this committee has taken a strong interest.

**Helen Eadie:** Having seen some of the figures, not just in the bulletin but elsewhere, I think that we should probably be quite pleased about the fact that the horizon 2020 moneys are now €71 billion. Although the budget has been cut from the projected amount that was hoped for—I think that they were looking at €80 billion—it is an increase from where we were, at €55 billion, so that is a good-news story.

The worry for farming in Scotland is the cut in the common agricultural policy moneys. That presents challenges to the remote and rural areas, but we have always known that reforming CAP has been on the agenda of many politicians across Europe. However, I share the concerns of Willie Coffey and Jamie McGrigor about broadband—looking to the future, we really want to work hard at improving that. Having said that, I hope that we will take advantage of the £28 billion that Ian Duncan keeps telling us is still available to the end of this financial year. It is down to us—to Willie, Jamie, me and others—to really put pressure on people out there to access that £28 billion that is available across Europe in the current financial year for the more remote and rural areas. I hope that the committee can give some priority to that specific piece of work so that we can see what we can do to generate activity among the providers, the private sector, the Government and so on. It is an important issue for the future.

**The Deputy Convener:** I wonder whether you might approach the appropriate committees to pursue that on our behalf.

**Helen Eadie:** As I said earlier, if we all think that someone else is doing it, it might be that whoever ends up doing it does not bring to the issue the same passion and commitment that members of this committee would.

**The Deputy Convener:** We could draw the attention of the other committee conveners to the issue.

**Ian Duncan:** We can do both those things. We can ensure that the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, which is leading on the issue and has already declared an interest in it, takes it forward. Of course, we will bring back information from that committee to this committee, to ensure that nothing slips through the cracks.

**Clare Adamson:** Yesterday, there was a bit of coverage in the media of the Deputy First Minister talking about the change in the allocation mechanism. I understand that it will be skewed

towards population areas rather than using a geographic basis. The figures suggest that the allocation will be cut by up to 30 per cent in some areas of Scotland. Could you give us more information on that?

**Ian Duncan:** The figures that I have given you show the settlement at a European level. Once the figures come down to the member state level, there are particular regulations that govern the allocation of those funds. Quite often, the allocation is domestically determined, within the broad guidelines. That is why the Deputy First Minister was able to say that this is an area in which progress can be made.

However, I have a suspicion that it will be difficult to make that progress until the European Parliament has made extremely clear what the figures look like. I do not think that the Scottish Parliament is going to enjoy any of these figures, and I think that it will definitely want them to be adjusted. However, I do not doubt that there will be negotiations between the constituent parts of the UK in order to ensure that no one loses out to the degree that has been suggested.

**Willie Coffey:** I am conscious of the time that we have this morning, so I would appreciate it if we had a chance—at our next meeting, perhaps—to consider some of the implications of the matter in more detail, and perhaps to receive a briefing from the cabinet secretary. The 86 per cent reduction in the telecommunications budget is staggering. I am afraid that it is kind of typical. Sometimes, it seems that information technology, which is not well understood by ordinary members in whatever Parliament, can be an easy hit. However, the implications are serious, and I think that we should flesh out the details.

**The Deputy Convener:** We could defer consideration of that suggestion until the next meeting and decide at that point whether we want to go down the road of inviting the cabinet secretary to speak to us about the issue.

**Jamie McGrigor:** It is pretty vital. We only have one year now in which to draw down the money.

**Helen Eadie:** There is a timescale issue. As Jamie McGrigor says, we have to get hold of as much of the money that is available as we can while we can. The issue that Willie Coffey raises is also important, however. What is the timescale for that matter? When will the European Parliament make its decisions? We need to lobby the European Parliament like mad to communicate the fact that we are extremely upset about this issue. That might not have any effect, but if you dinnae try, you willnae get. This committee and each of us as individual MSPs should be trying to do what we can behind the scenes to secure some change. I absolutely agree with Willie Coffey that technology

is critical for the economic chances of the remote and rural parts of Scotland.

**The Deputy Convener:** That is why I suggested that we should consider the issue at the next committee.

**Helen Eadie:** Is there a timescale, though?

**Ian Duncan:** There is. The Parliament can say only yes or no to the budget, so no one wants to have that vote until it will be a yes vote, for obvious reasons. In the intervening period, a dialogue will take place between the Council, the Parliament and the Commission to try to broker a deal that can be voted on in the Parliament. That will happen in the next four months, I would have thought.

**Helen Eadie:** So we have time.

**Ian Duncan:** Yes.

**The Deputy Convener:** I did not think that there was an emergency.

**Ian Duncan:** No. The thing to note about the cuts is that they are in the budgets where people did not expect money or where people did not have it in the past and were therefore not used to having it. It sounds a bit strange, but I think that the logic in some of the cuts is that, because they did not have the money before, they will not miss it.

**The Deputy Convener:** Okay.

**Jamie McGrigor:** None of us has been invited to the half-day conference on 22 February, have we?

**Ian Duncan:** It is an open invitation.

**Jamie McGrigor:** But it is incredibly short notice, with due respect.

**The Deputy Convener:** We are not organising it.

**Ian Duncan:** The short notice is my fault, because the information was made available on the website but not drawn to the committee's attention.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I am not blaming you, but we can go if we want, can we?

**Ian Duncan:** Indeed.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I do not know how I am going to get there, though.

**Helen Eadie:** The issue was in a previous bulletin.

**Ian Duncan:** Yes, we did put it in earlier.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I am not blaming you. I just wondered whether the invitation had come via Europe.

**Ian Duncan:** No.

**The Deputy Convener:** Are there any other questions or points?

**Roderick Campbell:** I have just a quick one. In the table in the annex, I am not entirely familiar with decommissioning in Lithuania, Slovakia and Bulgaria. The "Decommissions" figure seems to match the previous "Decommissions" figure, which I presume is just coincidence. Can you give us any further information on that?

**Ian Duncan:** It is in the area of nuclear decommissioning. Some of the member states in the east need support to decommission slightly older power stations, so money has been found specifically for that. One of the curious things is that the budget has managed to find something for everybody in some way or other. This is an example of one of the things that have been found for certain member states. There has previously been money for decommissioning in this area because of the fear that, if the facilities were not decommissioned safely and soundly, that would cause greater environmental and political problems.

**Helen Eadie:** Interestingly, when we and the convener met the ambassador two weeks ago, he said that they were going to build a new nuclear facility in Bulgaria.

**The Deputy Convener:** That is a different issue. It is a different portfolio.

**Helen Eadie:** Absolutely, but it is just interesting.

**The Deputy Convener:** Yes, indeed. Are there any other points or questions?

**Jamie McGrigor:** As far as you know, Mr Duncan, has the fisheries agreement been fairly well received by our Scottish fishermen?

**The Deputy Convener:** Jamie, you and I are never going to be satisfied.

**Jamie McGrigor:** No, but Ian Duncan is an expert on fisheries.

**Ian Duncan:** I would say that the fishing industry has received it fairly warmly, although fishermen are not always smiling when they receive these things. However, broadly speaking, I think that they seem to be supportive of the principal elements and are very appreciative of the suggestion of further localisation of management.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Good. Thank you.

**The Deputy Convener:** Okay. Are members content to send the report to the relevant committees?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Deputy Convener:** Thank you. That is the end of the meeting. The next meeting will be on 7 March. I look forward to seeing you all then. Thank you very much for your attendance and assistance.

*Meeting closed at 11:28.*



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