

Scottish Parliament
Cross Party Group on Poland Meeting
Thursday, 23 March 2017, 1.00-2.30 pm, Committee Room 3

MINUTES

In attendance:

Co-Convener

Maree Todd MSP, Scottish National Party

MSPs

Ivan McKee MSP, Scottish National Party

Speakers

Dorota Peszkowska, Vote. You are at Home Campaign

Maciej Dokurno, Fife Migrants Forum

Members

Dobrowa Jezior, Secretary

Consul Tomasz Tadla, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland

Sylwia Spooner, Consulate General of the Republic of Poland

Zofia Wierzbowicz-Fraser, Polish Education Committee

Dr Beata Kohlbek, Polish Education Committee

Dr Andrew Roach, Polish Education Committee

Krystyna Szumelukowa, Brexit and Beyond

Antony Kozlowski, Polish Social and Educational Society in Glasgow

Grażyna Fremi, Zielony Balonik

Joanna Zawadzka, Polish Cultural Festival Association

Jacek Rozalski, Emito.net

Katarzyna Kokowska, Interactive Writing Salon in Scotland

Lesley A. Duncan, Scotpipe

Aileen Orr

Monika Ciska, Gazeta Polonijna

Izabella Brodzińska, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Sylwia Kiro Żabinska-MacIntyre, Process Walk, Feniks, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Keith Mullins-MacIntyre, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Charlotte Kedsle, City of Edinburgh Council

Tomek Borkowy, Universal Arts

Anna Drogon, Polish Business Link

Pawel Kopeć, Polish Cultural Festival Association

Katarzyna Jackowska, Polish Cultural Festival Association

George Rubiński, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Michael Borland, Scottish Polish Cultural Association

Olivia Willis, Polish Professionals Forum

Roch Dunin-Wasowicz

Hugh McMahon

Jim Davidson

Nick Gardner
Robert Hodgart
Violeta Ilendo, Fife Polish Education Trust
Ewelina Lukaszek

1. Welcome from the Co-Convenor, Maree Todd MSP

Maree Todd MSP welcomed Members to the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Poland.

2. Apologies

David Torrance MSP
Anna Ruszel, Polish Professional Forum
Dr Karin Friedrich, University of Aberdeen
Prof. Robert Frost, University of Aberdeen
Pat Glacken, Polish Education Committee
Bartłomiej Kowalczyk, Polish Business Link
Katarzyna Jajszczok, Fife Free Press
Dr Izabela Czekaj, Polish Social and Educational Society in Glasgow
Maciej Wiczyński, Scottish National Party
Dr John Bates, Polish Education Committee, University of Glasgow
Chester Kruk

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of last meeting of CPG on Poland were approved.

Ivan McKee MSP informed the group that he had discussed possibility of sending a letter to the Polish Government by the CPG on Poland with other MSPs. The letter asking the Polish Government to secure rights of the Polish citizens living in Scotland and support Scotland's ambitions for a special settlement will be drafted by the Co-Conveners Maree Todd MSP and Claire Baker MSP.

4. Presentation by Dorota Peszkowska, Vote. You are at Home Campaign Coordinator

The Vote. You Are at Home campaign has been relaunched this year. The campaign is aimed at mobilising the Polish community in Scotland to exercise their civil rights and vote in the upcoming local elections.

CPG on Poland Members may remember the campaign from the last year, when so many offered to help. As part of information campaign volunteers manage a website <https://www.glosujwszkocji.uk/> and a FB fan page Jesteś u Siebie. Zagłosuj, as well as distribute leaflets and printed materials. With the help of volunteers from all of Scotland, including many of you here today, last year 7,5 k leaflets were distributed. This year campaign coordinators aim to make it 10k, with the help of migrant organisations in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Aberdeen, Scottish Borders, Fife.

Tangible results of the campaign are available, with almost 50 k Poles registered to vote. And although data is not complete and a significant part of the increase is due to the fact that last year

24 councils released their data, and this year 28 out of 32 councils, organisers are happy to see a clear correlation between numbers of registered Poles and places where they are most active: Edinburgh, Fife, around Glasgow.

Please join us on FB, where we share information on the voting process, registration procedure, and Polish candidates. If you'd like, we would ask you to take part in a promotional video.

5. Presentation by Maciej Dokurno, Fife Migrants Forum

When the CPG on Poland was reestablished last year, Maciej Dokurno suggested including regional assembly links within the purpose of the Group ("To facilitate political, cultural and economic links between Scotland and Poland including building links with regional assemblies",) which could be of particular interest to MSPs.

The territory of Poland is divided into voivodeships (regions) and smaller powiats (counties or districts), divided into gminas (communes or municipalities). Poland currently has 16 self-governed voivodeships (run by local governments). Their leader is usually a "Marszałek" (Marshall).

Links between Fife and Torun (Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship)

- Maciej Dokurno, who had established Fife Migrants Forum and also works with the Fife Council, is originally from Torun, one of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian (*kujawsko-pomorskie*) Voivodeship capitals. Torun authorities contacted him about possible regional cooperation with Scotland.
- As a result of that cooperation, last October, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the first airdrop of Cichociemni (also known as the Silent Unseen), the Marshall's Office of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region along with the General Elżbieta Zawacka Foundation in Torun co-organised the project 'Elisabeth Watson – Cichociemna' in St Andrews and Kirkcaldy. The project sheds light on this outstanding Polish woman: a teacher, a woman soldier, a political prisoner, an academic teacher, a participant in the Solidarity movement and a social activist. The event was a great success and attracted interest of local authorities in Fife. The Marshall of Torun participated in the event himself and met with MSPs and Council officials. The project was co-funded by the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region, whose officials are also very good at receiving European funds for their projects. This initiative opened many doors for further cooperation and brought benefits to Fife.
- Another project linking Fife and the Kuyavian-Pomeranian region was an exhibition dedicated to the British Prisoners of War held in German camps in Poland during the Second World War. The exhibition is now shown in Torun and thanks to EU funds it will be presented at Largo House in Fife in April.
- There are also plans for a Youth Development Centre in Fife and a museum (possibly in St Andrews) allowing both regions to link their historical heritage. The project is now in the early stages of development and will aim at skills development and employability, as well as involve working with disadvantaged youth.
- June 2017 – plans for a piano recital in Scotland by Rafał Blechacz, the winner of the 15th International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw and an honorary citizen of the Kuyavian and Pomeranian Region. Details TBC

Maree Todd MSP thanked Maciej for his presentation and said she found that particular topic interesting due to a personal connection, as her uncle had been a POW in Poland. Maree had mentioned that fact in her opening speech during the exhibition launch event (*Scottish Polish Heritage of WWII: Life Stories*) at the Scottish Parliament on 14 March.

Maciej informed the group that he had been in touch with a museum in Poland about honoring British Prisoners of War with a commemorative plaque. Maree said that perhaps people from her town would be interested in helping with this initiative.

Tomek Borkowy added that Łódź had also expressed interest in connecting with Scotland.

Krystyna Szumelukowa said that the current partnership between Krakow and Edinburgh should be enhanced as there is a need to build on these links (also between the University of Edinburgh and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow).

Maciej Dokurno agreed that existing links between Polish and Scottish cities and regions need to be fostered, especially while European projects can be still initiated. There are now 2 years left to instigate new partnerships.

Sylwia Sponer informed the group about other existing twinning agreements: Perth – Bydgoszcz, Duns – Zagan, Falkirk - Chelmno.

6. Sub-committees

a) Update from the Brexit and Beyond group, Krystyna Szumelukowa

The group met on March 20 2017 to review ongoing developments since the last meeting of the CPG on January 24 2017.

The EU Constitutional Affairs Committee, chaired by Danuta Hübner, met on 30 January 2017 and was attended by Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Minister for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs. At the request of Michael Russell, Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, a briefing note was provided to the office of the committee and to the Scottish Government for information.

The first meeting of the Belvedere Forum took place in Warsaw on March 8/9 2017. This forum has been established as a bi-lateral arrangement between the UK and Polish governments following the visit of the Polish PM and Ministers in the autumn of 2016. A follow up reception is to be held in London on May 10 hosted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It should be noted that the CPG model of MSP and community engagement is appreciated and FCO officials recommended communication with the All Party Group in Westminster. A report is attached.

The group agreed on March 20 to raise issues over Police Scotland vetting practice (cases of family background being checked) with the Chief Constable and to be in touch with Gordon Brown to discuss his "third way" option.

The UK is proceeding to the triggering of Article 50 without amendment guaranteeing the lawful rights of EU nationals. There is no progress; the group is of the opinion that assurance is not enough.

Article 50 will be triggered on March 29th and we will need to follow the two year time line until March 29th 2019.

A meeting was held on March 16 2017 with Ashleigh Gray, Senior Policy Advisor, EU Migration Policy in the Scottish Government who has responsibility for designing future regulations in Scotland applicable to cross border movements. She is able to co-ordinate policy and practice on this vital subject. It is important to have a liaison in the Scottish Government.

A significant example of a practical response from a major institution is provided by the University of Edinburgh, which has decided to appoint a Europe Director and a staff immigration adviser. Support sessions with external lawyers will be offered to staff and students and financial and administrative support for individual legal consultations.

David Worthington of the University of the Highlands and Islands is working on proposals to identify and progress studies and understanding in the areas of Health and Well Being and Bilingualism with a focus on migration issues in the peripheral Highlands and Islands. His intention is to bring partners together in a series of events and workshops during 2017-2018.

The model of the Belvedere Forum could perhaps be recreated in Scotland. It has prompted a proposal to hold a conference in Scotland to examine the issues of Brexit and Beyond with delegates from Poland. We would wish to discuss this further with colleagues.

The Polish Ex-Combatants Association in London has determined that a refurbishment of 11, Drummond Place, Edinburgh should be implemented to make it fit for purpose. It will commence with an initial condition survey and options appraisal. The decision is in respect of its history and heritage and to offer an improved facility for future generations and as a contribution to civic engagement between Scotland and Poland.

Antony Kozlowski informed the group that the Polish Social and Educational Society in Glasgow hopes to renovate and restore the Sikorski House in Glasgow as well and have put a crowd-funding page in place: <http://www.sikorskipolishclub.org.uk/C5/index.php/home/donate/>. The fabric and the interior of the building will need to be restored sufficiently. Installation of disabled access is essential as well – there are plans for installation of a ramp and lift and make the stairs more user-friendly.

b) Update from the Business group, Anna Drogon, Polish Business Link

Polish Business Link Scotland Network is dedicated to our members and partners from Scotland. Our Scotland network is very active throughout the year with minimum 4 events annually. We meet in different parts of Scotland, mainly Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. You can find list of our Scottish-based members and forthcoming events in your local area here: <http://www.pblink.co.uk/scotland>.

Upcoming events:

PBLINK Summer Business Networking in Edinburgh 28 June 2017 - the aim of this meeting is not only to provide the audience with helpful information and useful business insight, but also to create

a network for entrepreneurial diverse Community in the UK. Our invited guest speakers will have a 10-min speaking slot. After presentations we invite all guests to deliver a 30 seconds introduction of their business during speed networking session, which will be followed by 1:1 networking in a relaxed, informal atmosphere over a snack and a drink. Every delegate will have the opportunity to network and exchange business cards with all other guests as well as with our speakers. Our informal networking will continue at a local pub near Edinburgh's West End. This event is open to all PBLINK members their guests and to non-members who would like to expand their business networks and seek potential clients, suppliers or partners.

PBLINK October Business Networking in Edinburgh, 4 October 2017

The 2017 Scottish Polish Business Forum in Edinburgh, 23 November 2017 – an all-day event in Scotland. This event will be a chance for Scottish SMEs to tap into the thriving network of Polish and diverse businesses, opening up the potential of new markets, including lucrative export opportunities. But equally, Scottish firms benefit greatly from identifying Scottish-based Polish contractors, for example in the construction sector. Above all, this event is a great opportunity to talk to each-other, to exchange business ideas, best practice and mingle with Scottish peers.

c) Update from the Culture group, Joanna Zawadzka, PCFA

Polish Cultural Festival Association

PCFA is finalising work on the Erasmus+ project "Leaders in minority organisations. Improving organizational standards of Polish diaspora organizations working on activation of youth".

The products of this project are three widely available publications (the last one to be completed in May) on: a) diagnosis of a local community with migrant/minority groups b) creating the strategy of organisational growth and management for an organisation working with local diaspora c) innovative ways of activation and engagement of the young Polish diaspora through civic education.

Scottish Polish Tartan Festival

This year the SPCA, in collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council, Krakow City Council and the Polish Cultural festival Association, are organizing a series of events which will teach and promote the history and heritage of Scottish tartan. The main theme for the festival is the process of designing and weaving a tartan for Krakow as an honorary gift from the people of Edinburgh in order to maintain the partnership between the two Cities.

Design Scottish Tartan for Krakow – online competition (19th April – 19th May 2017) – the main prize is a weekend for two in Krakow. At the end of May our special Jury will select five designs that will be sent to Krakow for public vote. The winner of the competition will be announced at the end of June.

The celebration of the Polish Constitution of 3rd May, 1791 will be on 13th May – the event will include a concert from Scotpipe, an Edinburgh based pipe band, a tartan fashion show and a lecture, followed by a reception with a hot buffet of Polish dishes.

Tartan Workshop for Children (14th May) – we invite children to take part in the tartan design and craft workshop. Join us to learn about the heritage of Scottish tartan, and how to design and register your own pattern. All children will be encouraged to use their imagination and create craft products from tartan fabrics. The event will include a bagpipe concert and a highland dance performance.

Kite & Trumpet Festival (Latawiec & Trąbka) – October 2017, co-organised by Art Factory in Lodz and PCFA. It will showcase theatre groups for children, design artists and workshops. Details TBC

Scottish Polish Cultural Association is organising an **Evening with Jane Stirling** on 28 April - an evening of music and narration in commemoration of Fryderyk Chopin and Jane Stirling. The event is a part of The Jane Stirling Festival, taking place in Scotland and Poland in 2017.

d) Education

- Update from the Education group, Zofia Wierzbowicz-Fraser

The Education group met with Mr John Swinney (Deputy First Minister for Education and Skills) at the Scottish Parliament on 7th February 2017.

- Importance of links between Scotland and Poland and importance of present day dialogue were stressed.
- The group members attending the meeting presented case for Polish to be introduced as an option as a Modern Language in schools. They highlighted the importance of bilingualism, reasons for promoting Polish and benefits, both long and short-term, as well as presented materials already prepared.
- Numbers of Polish nationals in Scotland, passports issues, potential uptake of courses if offered were discussed, stressing again why Polish is so important and why it matters.
- We were heard out and questioned as to “How will Polish qualifications close the attainment gap?” Deputy First Minister was of the opinion that delivery of the teaching was very important and the Dual GTCS registration was not an answer to the situation. However, the Deputy First Ministers’ views are in line with Education policy over many years, in that Polish pupils will be supported to achieve better results. With the policy of GIRFEC (Getting it Right for every Child), most Polish children “get through”.
- DFM also underlined the allocation of “Pupil Equity Funding” which will be available for Head teachers in their communities to allocate as they see fit, and support pupils with English as a 2nd language. He was adamant in not considering the inclusion of Polish at the present time, as there is no instant solution on qualifications.
- DFM stated we had a joint agenda with him, to be reviewed in 6-9 months’ time.

The Co-Convener Maree Todd MSP assured Zosia that CPG on Poland Members will put pressure on MSPs and on the Deputy First Minister regarding the review.

-Dr Beata Kohlbek, Mohr Language Support

Mohr Language Support is a charity working with Ethnic Minority children and young people, schools and Local Authorities, addressing the need for English as an Additional Language (EAL) support and promoting the right of access to heritage languages. We set up two Saturday Polish School and directly supported over 100 pupils with English language lessons, worked with 14 schools offering training sessions, advice and pupil support.

Why English language support?

Schooling is fundamentally a linguistic process - Content is presented and assessed through language. In Scotland today, we have over 39,000 pupils in full-time education who speak English as an Additional Language. Approx. 22,000 require additional support to access the Curriculum.

Financial constraints and the low priority and understanding given to this issue mean that many young people in full-time education in Scotland are not offered support.

We see young people, mostly in the group 13-16 years old, who do not achieve the educational outcomes they are capable of, because their English is not at an advanced level. They often lack direction after leaving secondary school and their parents are unable to guide them, being unfamiliar with the system themselves.

The Scottish Government invests in the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Pupil Equity Fund and EAL is intended to be part of this investment. However, too little is being done at the Local Authority and school levels to help these youngsters. To truly "Get It Right For Every Child", more needs to be done for this growing group of pupils in Scottish schools.

Within the Cross Party Group on Poland, most of us are bilingual and understand the significance of having a good command of the English language.

Mohr Language Support would like to ask for your help with raising awareness about EAL in Scotland and to help us increase the support given to migrant children, Polish children constitute the largest Ethnic Minority amongst EAL pupils.

-Grażyna Fremi, Zielony Balonik

Broughton High School in Edinburgh will hold lunch time book club reading books in Polish and English. On 1 April they will discuss "Swallowing Mercury" by Wioletta Greg.

e) Update from the Support group, Kiro Źabińska-MacIntyre

Recent Feniks activities – Polish Toddler Group: weekly meetings for parents and grandparents with their children (up to 2 years old) held every week in the McDonald library (McDonald Road Library 2-4 McDonald Rd, Edinburgh, EH7 4LU). Admission is free.

On 2 – 5 March Feniks organised Open Days offering free workshops and consultation.

Significant progress in the 'Suicide Group' that comprises now of the Consul Jolanta Srebrakowska, representatives of NHS Rachel King (Mental Health Team) and Dr Dermot Gorman (Public Health NHS Lothian), Alan Laughland (Choose Life Network), Police Scotland and Feniks. On the basis of the NHS records we identified 86 Polish names of people who died of suicide or undetermined death between 2012 and 2016. To further analyse the circumstances of the deaths, the group applied to

access Crown Office reports from the post-mortem investigations. Rachel, Magda and Dermot are going to analyse them, and hopefully, they will be able to report on their findings at the next CPG.

As the answer to the increasing level of domestic abuse within the Polish community Feniks called a national meeting for the Polish workers and volunteers helping with the problem. The meeting was held in Perth on 11th February. We were happy to host 18 representatives of the 13 organisations from across Scotland (i.e. Feniks, PKAVS, RenPa, Kołowrotek, Shakti, Ross-shire Women's Aid and more). The aim of the meeting was to discuss if there were ways to cooperate on the national level to raise awareness among the Polish community. The group constituted itself as **Polish Women Support Network** and is planning an awareness raising campaign during the 16 Days of Action against gender based violence in November 2017.

It is Feniks's 10th anniversary in August 2017. We are planning to celebrate it with a conference in September 2017. We will share details closer to the date.

6. AOB

There were no other matters of current business raised.

7. Date of the next meeting: TBC