

Cross Party Group on Ukraine

Tuesday 16th April 2024 18:00 – 20:00 (hybrid)

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Colin Beattie MSP
Miles Briggs MSP
Clare Adamson MSP

Paul O’Kane MSP
Ben Macpherson MSP

Invited Guests

Bohdan Yaremenko, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament *[Could not access the meeting remotely due to technical difficulties]*
Oleksandra Sologub, Chief Executive Officer, Nazovni
Magda Czarnecka, Feniks
David Pratt, The Herald on Sunday, The National, Sunday National
Robbie Fraser, Dulcimer Films One

Non-MSP Group Members

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk
Yevgen Gorash
Hanna Tekliuk
Kseniia Smyrnova
Tanya Balanova
Maryan Pokhylyuk
Doug Allan
Oleksandra Wierzbicka
Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh represented by Andrii Kuslii
AUGB Edinburgh represented by Larysa Leshkoshvili
AUGB Dundee represented by Mykhailo Pavlov and Valentyna Mykhailenko
AUGB Glasgow represented by Olga Lutsyshyn
Center for Civil Liberties represented by Anna Nazaruk
Nadiya represented by Derek Edwards and Anna Merchuk
Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations’ Council represented by John Hawryluk
Ukrainian Collective
The Scottish Council on Global Affairs represented by John Edward

Steven Carr
Anna Kulish
Olha Maksymiak
Bohdan Kruk
Kateryna Campbell
Oleksandra Novatska
Anne Yarney

Apologies

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
Russell Findlay MSP
Liam McArthur MSP
Anastasia Klimash
Viktor Radchenko
Olena Litvinova-Kutsai
Oleksandr Chernykh
Michael Ostapko
Olga Biryuk
Vasyl Kren
Juliette Lichman

Katy Clark MSP
Christine Grahame MSP
Scottish Refugee Council
Zhenya Dove
Illia Malanchuk
Yulianna Shalenyk
Dmytro Syrota
Olena Yuzkova
Kvitka Perehinets
Peter David Kormylo

Agenda item 1 Convenor

• Welcome and Apologies

Colin Beattie MSP (CB MSP) welcomes attendees (both in the Committee Room and online) and opens a meeting. Apologies are to be noted in the minutes.

- **Minutes 20th February 2024 Meeting**

Minutes are approved as presented.

Agenda item 2 Guest Speakers on Ukraine Recovery

- **Bohdan Yaremenko, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament, Member of the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation**

Could not access the meeting remotely due to technical difficulties.

- **Oleksandra Sologub, Chief Executive Officer, Nazovni**

[Due to technical difficulties, Oleksandra Sologub's input has been moved to after Agenda Item 3 but is included in the minutes to maintain consistency with the agenda].

Oleksandra Sologub (OS) introduces the Nazovni as a service dedicated to facilitating the global expansion of Ukrainian businesses. It is institutionally and informationally supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, among others, including embassies and consulates worldwide. OS outlines the platform's achievements and potential benefits as follows: it has been operational for over two years, comprising approximately 2,000 vetted companies; the platform also ensures reliable partnerships through thorough verification processes.

OS provides details on market analysis and campaigns, noting the completion of over 700 market research applications and more than 20 retail campaigns facilitated by economic diplomats. OS highlights that over 90 contracts have been signed, and the Nazovni platform has organized more than 95 exhibitions for over 450 Ukrainian companies.

OS mentions the representation of Ukrainian companies at more than 80 international exhibitions and the significant improvement in the platform's Net Promoter Score, from -8% to 75%.

OS elaborates on the focus areas, listing sectors such as electrical and other equipment, food and beverages, furniture, wood, tech talent, clothing, packaging, natural stones, commodities, and metal structures. OS notes that 329 applications have been submitted by Ukrainian companies to enhance their export capabilities in the UK.

OS introduces Nazovni Match, a tool allowing foreign companies to request products or services and be matched with verified Ukrainian companies. Additionally, OS discusses the Ukrainian Catalog of Goods and Services, which features over 200 vetted companies and is used by economic diplomats during exhibitions.

OS mentions partnerships and initiatives, including collaboration with local and international associations to support Ukrainian exporters. OS presents the Nazovni.Tech platform as an international initiative focused on scientific and high-tech projects in Ukraine's recovery and integration efforts.

OS identifies current spheres of interest, including assistance to SMEs in export matters, mental health and physical rehabilitation for military personnel and their families, and environmental projects addressing water and soil contamination. OS also mentions public-private partnerships, post-war return of citizens to Ukraine, and energy efficiency initiatives.

Followed by questions and comments from Colin Beattie MSP, Ben Macpherson MSP, Ukrainian Consul Andrii Kuslii, John Hawryluk, and Anna Kulish. The matters of supporting an exhibition of Ukrainian business in Scotland as well as bridging Scottish-Ukrainian business opportunities have been discussed.

Agenda item 3 Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh

Andrii Kuslii, Consul (AK) highlights the realities of Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine and the urgent need for collective international support, acknowledging the resilience of the Ukrainian military and the notable strides made despite being on the defensive. AK stresses the importance of decisive action to hold perpetrators accountable for war crimes under international law.

AK underscores the significant impact of the war on Ukraine's infrastructure and the paramount need for foreign investment in reconstruction efforts. Scotland, with its strong business connections and innovative industries, could play a significant role in supporting Ukraine's regions to rebuild and recover, AK argues. Establishing business connections between regions of Ukraine and Scotland could be mutually beneficial, enabling Ukraine to access expertise, technology, and investment from Scottish companies while offering Scotland new market opportunities.

AK elaborates on the potential for economic projects and endeavours to foster mutual trust and cooperation, mentioning opportunities in renewable energy, technology transfer, agriculture, and tourism.

Agenda item 4 Membership Requests

All membership requests and relevant application materials were distributed to members by the secretary prior to the meeting. The memberships of Giles Sutherland, Valeriya Golovina, Feniks, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland, and Peter Cooper were approved by the Cross-Party Group.

Due to objections raised within the CPG, the decision on the membership requests of Jennifer Carr and Nadiia Karpenko was deferred, and the Cross-Party Convenors decided not to move forward with their applications after the meeting.

Agenda item 5 Members on Working Groups

- **John Hawryluk on Resettlement Working Group**

John Hawryluk (JH) begins by thanking members for their attendance at the commemoration event at Edinburgh Castle regarding the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine that was marked as Scotland's largest commemoration for the war outside of Armistice Day. He highlights the increased media coverage and notes the presence of significant figures, including the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Scottish First Minister, the Presiding Officer, CPG Convener and Deputy Conveners, Consular Corps, and representatives from communities.

JH outlines the key relationships, existing infrastructure, and overarching vision of the Resettlement Working Group, which aims to provide political advocacy to ensure the success of the "Warm Scots Welcome".

The Working Group identified employment, long-term housing, mental health, and community support as key priorities, that require further support and best practice sharing to reduce disparities in service access, especially in rural areas.

The next steps include confirming membership and holding the first meeting of the Working Group. The Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Ukraine Working Group on Resettlement Terms of Reference, as distributed ahead of the meeting and presented, are approved by the CPG.

- **Kseniia Smyrnova on Education Working Group**

Kseniia Smyrnova (KS) highlights the pivotal role of education in enhancing collaboration between Scottish and Ukrainian institutions and the importance of creating interdisciplinary hubs to foster research collaboration across various fields. The goal is to avoid brain drain and enhance institutional resilience in Ukraine through international collaboration.

The Working Group's priorities include the internationalization of education as a strategic opportunity for developing Ukrainian educational institutions, which could significantly aid in rebuilding Ukraine post-war. This includes intensifying research activities between Ukrainian and Scottish universities, developing double degree or joint degree programs, ensuring quality assurance in education, and aligning qualification degrees between Scottish and Ukrainian regulations. KS mentions that the Working Group will invite guest experts from Scottish and Ukrainian institutions to contribute to the Group's priorities and introduces the members of the Working Group on Education: John Edward, Head of Operations at the Scottish Council on Global Affairs; Pauline Radcliffe, Chief Executive at the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership; Professor James Smith, Vice-Principal International of the University of Edinburgh; Hanna Tekliuk, Director of Education at the Ukrainian St Margaret's Saturday School; Illia Malanchuk, President of the Glasgow University Ukrainian Society and the Secretary of the Working Group; Kseniia Smyrnova, Vice-Rector of Kyiv National University and the Chair of the Working Group.

The Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Ukraine Working Group on Education memberships and the Terms of Reference, as distributed ahead of the meeting and presented, are approved by the CPG.

Followed by questions and discussion.

- **Oleksandra Novatska on Culture Working Group**

Oleksandra Novatska (ON, on behalf of Zhenya Dove, the Chair of the Working Group), emphasizes the importance of building a cultural bridge between Ukraine and Scotland, highlighting the promotion of modern Ukrainian culture in Scotland and Scottish culture in Ukraine as the key focus of the Working Group.

ON stresses the need to preserve Ukrainian culture amidst ongoing Russian aggression, which threatens Ukrainian cultural identity and heritage. She notes the richness and diversity of Ukrainian arts, language, and traditions, and the significance of cultural exchanges in fostering stronger diplomatic ties and mutual understanding. She emphasizes the need for initiatives to document, preserve, and showcase Ukrainian cultural heritage, as well as to support Ukrainian cultural groups in Scotland. ON concludes by introducing members of the Working Group on Culture: Ben Macpherson, MSP; Victor Radchenko, Managing Director at Svytlo; Juliette Lichman, individual member; Oleksandra Novatska, Artist, Art Curator, and the Secretary of the Working Group; Zhenya Dove, Ukrainian activist, volunteer, spokesperson, and Chair of the Working Group.

The Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Ukraine Working Group on Culture memberships and the Terms of Reference, as distributed ahead of the meeting and presented, are approved by the CPG.

Followed by questions and discussion.

- **Anna Kulish on Business and Economy Working Group**

Anna Kulish (AnK) begins by highlighting the massive £390 billion reconstruction effort needed in Ukraine, emphasizing the resilience and determination to build a stronger, modern nation. She notes the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is focusing on energy, food security, infrastructure, and strengthening the private sector.

AnK points to Ukraine's natural resources, skilled workforce, and international financial support as key investment drivers, along with preferential market access through the EU Association and Free Trade Agreement and the extended tariff-free trade agreement with the UK. She invites the Scottish private and public sectors to invest in Ukraine's recovery, emphasizing the importance of public-private partnerships like Nazovni.

AnK mentions the Working Group's goals of identifying business opportunities, dispelling misconceptions about doing business with Ukraine, and promoting it as an attractive investment destination. She introduces Oleksandr Chernykh, representative of the Ukrainian National Bar in Scotland and Secretary of the Working Group, and Anna Kulish, the Cross-Border Transactional Lawyer and the Chair of the Working Group.

The Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Ukraine Working Group on Business and Economy memberships and the Terms of Reference, as distributed ahead of the meeting and presented, are approved by the CPG.

- **Steven Carr on Health and Wellbeing Working Group**

Steven Carr (SC) mentions that an unsettled home environment negatively impacts health, while positive effects on well-being can be derived from motion and culture.

SC points out that education and language barriers create problems in accessing healthcare, stressing the importance of collaboration between groups to address these issues. He acknowledges that accessing healthcare is challenging, and these challenges are exacerbated by language barriers and stigmas. The Working Group aims to break down these barriers and make access easier both locally through good practices and nationally through support rollouts.

SC underscores the importance of community-led initiatives in supporting health and well-being, stating that this is a key area of exploration for the Group. Additionally, SC emphasizes the need to utilize the skills of Ukrainian health workers present in the community, finding effective ways to integrate their contributions.

SC also addresses the critical role of funding in achieving the Group's goals. The Working Group will explore ways to provide funding support both locally and nationally.

The next steps include confirming membership, developing and approving the Terms of Reference.

Agenda item 6 Photo Message: Pictures from Ukraine

- **David Pratt, Contributing Foreign Editor, The Herald On Sunday / The National/ Sunday National**

David Pratt (DP) emphasizes his long-standing relationship with Ukraine, dating back to 2014, highlighting his firsthand experience during the Maidan protests and subsequent visits. He introduces his colleague, Robbie Fraser, a Scottish filmmaker, and discusses their collaborative efforts in documenting the war in Ukraine through films like "Pictures from Ukraine" for BBC Scotland. Despite the lack of current commissions, they are committed to continuing their documentation efforts.

DP discusses the importance of thinking ahead regarding Ukraine's reconstruction, despite it seeming premature. He praises the efficiency and resilience of Ukrainians in repairing war-damaged areas and highlights the crucial role Scotland can play in supporting these efforts. He emphasizes the need to address both physical and psychological damage, particularly the often-overlooked mental health challenges post-war.

DP mentions their recent project inspired by the twinning of Glasgow and Mykolaiv, aiming to use this connection to promote cultural understanding and solidarity. They plan to create a short film to showcase the similarities between the cities and foster cultural exchanges.

DP expresses concern about Ukraine dropping off the radar in Scotland and the emerging complacency and even resentment towards ongoing support for Ukraine. He stresses the importance of maintaining solidarity and awareness, using media and cultural projects to keep Ukraine on the agenda.

DP concludes by reiterating the need for strong messaging and solidarity, suggesting the Cross-Party Group on Ukraine could also play a pivotal role in this effort.

The photos from the "Pictures from Ukraine" series were shown.

Agenda item 7 Round Table Discussion

The meeting is concluded with the roundtable discussion.

Closing Remarks

CB MSP concludes the meeting by expressing gratitude to all participants for their active engagement and emphasizing the importance of keeping Ukraine in focus through social media and other means.