

Distinctly Birmingham

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION STEERING GROUP MEETING

NOTES

Practical details:

Time: 13:00-14:30

Date: Friday 13 March

Venue: Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry,
Rooms Venture A and B
75 Harborne Road
Birmingham
B15 3DH

Present:

Steve Harding (Chair)	Birmingham City University
Jennifer Crisp	Birmingham City Council
Sunny Claire	Enterprise Europe Network
Heather Law	Birmingham City Council
Joseph Priestley	Office of Neena Gill MEP
James Woodcock	International Synergies Ltd
Karen Grinsell	Office of Anthea McIntyre MEP
Robert Hayes	Birmingham Museums Trust
Michele Taylor	Medical Devices Technology International
Lloyd Broad	Birmingham City Council

Apologies:

Andrew Roadnight (due to train problems)	University of Warwick
Xavier Rodde	University of Birmingham
Katherine Fuller (on leave)	Innovation Birmingham Ltd / Climate KIC
Stephen Maddock	CBSO
Liz Baines	CBSO
Symon Easton	Birmingham City Council
Val Birchall	Birmingham City Council
Miguel Oyarzun	BE Festival
Ellen McAdam (R.Hayes attended in her place)	Birmingham Museums Trust
Peter Laybourn (J. Woodcock attended in his place)	International Synergies Ltd
Linda Saunders	DanceXchange
Jackie Homan	Birmingham City Council
Pam Waddell	Birmingham Science City
Beverley Nielsen	Birmingham City University

1. Welcome. Introductions and apologies

These were noted. Steve Harding thanked EEN for hosting the meeting at Birmingham Chamber.

2. [Notes of previous meeting](#)

These were agreed or would be followed up later on the agenda. Steve once again thanked the MEPs for their input at the last meeting.

3. Update on Priority 1 of our action plan - Deepening exchange, exposure and partnerships:

Local stakeholders and Birmingham's European partner cities:

- Milan's Expo in Città June 2015 – Milan has invited its partner cities to take part in a range of cultural activities as part of its Expo in Città programme. Birmingham City Council is working with Birmingham University on this and a conference and reception promoting design-led businesses from in and around Birmingham will be held, this will incorporate the Birmingham Made Me initiative and also BCU's involvement in the Design for Europe project. The office of Neena Gill MEP has also kindly facilitated links to the Borsa Italia who will be involved in the reception. Beverley Nielsen also recently talked about the Milan project at a Birmingham Made Me dinner including senior GBSLEP people to raise awareness locally about this initiative. Steve Harding thanked Heather Law at Birmingham City Council for her work in supporting this initiative with Milan.
- Leipzig's 1000th anniversary celebration – Leipzig is marking its 1000th anniversary of its founding as a city this year. All of its sister cities have been invited to participate in an event they are holding by sending over an up and coming chef from their city and by sending over a musical performer / group. University College Birmingham have agreed to send over one of their chef-lecturers and we are waiting for more information from Leipzig about what kind of musical performer they are seeking from us.
- Frankfurt-Birmingham 50th anniversary in 2016 – J. Crisp flagged up that this partner city anniversary is coming up this year at that Birmingham City Council is starting to explore with Frankfurt ways in which this could be marked. If your organisation has any connections to Frankfurt and would like to explore being involved in marking the anniversary year please contact Karolina.medwecka@birmingham.gov.uk

4. Update on Priority 2 of our action plan - Maximising large-scale, pan-European initiatives to support the development of Birmingham's key growth sectors

- Update on Healthy Living and Active Ageing KIC
In Andrew Roadnight's absence, Jennifer Crisp gave a very brief update stating that she had heard that West Midlands Academic and Health Science Network (lead body for West Midlands partners in the Health KIC) would be holding a stakeholder briefing in April on latest KIC news but a date had not yet been confirmed. When further news is available this will be shared with the Europe Association.

5. Update on Priority 3 of our action plan - Supporting the city's competitiveness and innovation agenda through European working

- Plans for Horizon 2020 workshop aimed at SMEs (see tabled paper – available [here](#))
It was proposed in the tabled paper to hold two events to demystify H2020 to SMEs. One event in April on SME-specific aspects of Horizon 2020, then a further event in May to link specific H2020 ideas that our universities are developing and to promote partnership opportunities for our local SMEs.
It was agreed that a meeting of the university and business intermediary organisations that are members of the Europe Association come together before Easter to scope this out further.
- Promotion of Horizon 2020 health calls in 2016
The Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels office has recently been in contact with the National Contact Point at Innovate UK on the health calls within Horizon 2020. Innovate UK has offered to hold an event in Birmingham to promote the content of the 2016 health calls.
Partners felt that it would be best to be pursued through the WM partners involved in the Healthy Living and Active Ageing KIC as there is a ready-made broad partnership of organisations that could be interested.
It was agreed that Jennifer Crisp would contact Susannah Goh at Birmingham Science City / WMAHSN about this.
- Feedback from event at UoB - Marie Curie Actions: Bridging Business and Research, 18 February
No update as X. Rodde was unable to attend.
- Interreg proposal
Steve Harding reported that BCU is discussing the possibility of a project with Birmingham City Council and Berlin and Amsterdam. This would look innovative ways of supporting SMEs in the growth sectors, the project would also need to feed into the ESIF smart specialisation strategy. He is in the process of clarifying with the Interreg secretariat how many local partners can be involved. However, a local steering group could be set up despite any formal limitations.

6. Update on Priority 4 of our action plan - Develop greater joined-up working among local partners, as well as closer working with our ambassadors in Europe to further enhance Birmingham's reputation and influence

- Publication of Benefits to Birmingham of being in the EU
This document came back from the printers today and copies were circulated. The document outlines some of the funding, trade and inward investment benefits the EU has brought to Birmingham. It can also be downloaded as a PDF [here](#). Steve Harding thanked members of the Europe Association for their input, contributions and case study examples, and also to Heather Law who was the editor. If you require further paper copies please get in touch distinctly@birmingham.gov.uk
- Recent discussions with MEPs about raising the profile of Birmingham and the West Midlands in Brussels:
 - Exhibition in the EP sponsored by Neena Gill MEP

At the last Europe Association meeting Neena mentioned that she would be keen to host an exhibition and reception in the EP to promote Birmingham. Since then she has talked further to Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Made Me (at BCU) who are keen to work with Neena, and indeed other partners, on this.

However, there are some issues regarding the scheduling of this. At present no external events are taking place at the EP due to increased security. Notwithstanding this, partners have tried to look at dates for later in 2015 / early 2016 that coincide with other events taking place in Brussels in order to maximise value and impact of an exhibition. To this end Neena's office tried to book the space during Open Days and SME week this year but the space was already booked on those dates. Neena's office currently has the space provisionally booked for the week of 21 September although we are keen that this could link to something taking place or respond to a timely policy issue.

It was agreed that if you have any ideas regarding a suitable opportunity in Brussels this could link to or would like to discuss further contact Jennifer.crisp@birmingham.gov.uk and joe@neenagill.com

- Establishing an apolitical Brussels friends of Birmingham and the WM – Dan Dalton MEP
Jennifer Crisp and Brussels office colleagues recently met Dan Dalton, the new Conservative MEP for the West Midlands. He would like to set up an apolitical network of friends of Birmingham / the West Midlands in Brussels. He is keen to work with the Brussels office partners on this. Jennifer said she would also mention his idea to the Europe Association. D. Dalton has scheduled a meeting to explore cross-party working on this with Sion Simon MEP. Jennifer suggested that the EP exhibition Neena is sponsoring could perhaps be used as an event to kick off this network.

Steve Harding asked that Neena Gill's and Anthea McIntyre's advisors, who were present, to explore the possibility of the Labour and Conservative MEPs working together on this network and the EP exhibition, and perhaps linking the two initiatives in some way to maximise benefit and visibility.

- Update on recent meeting of Chairs of the other area-based associations (Commonwealth, North America and China)
The Chairs of all the area-based associations met for the first time on 9 March with the Leader of Birmingham City Council, Sir Albert Bore. Sir Albert pleased with the progress the Associations have made over the past year, particularly with joining up partners and initiatives.
For the Europe Association, much of its work so far has related to EU funding and this will continue. However, it was felt that more could also be done within the Europe Association to join up how Birmingham works with its European partner cities i.e. Frankfurt, Leipzig, Lyon and Milan. We will try to tackle this more in our future meetings.

7. Any other business

- Joe from Neena Gill's office informed the group about a West Midlands launch of the Elite programme (London Stock Exchange), this has already been launched in London and Milan. Elite is a support programme aimed at larger SMEs with the goal of getting these SMEs AIMs

(alternative investment market) listed. Neena's office are finding speakers and are in contact with EEF and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce about promoting this. The provisional date for this launch is 3 July. Steve Harding mentioned Venture Fest aimed at SMEs taking place at the NEC at the end of June.

It was agreed that Jennifer would put Joe in contact with Pam Waddell about Venture Fest to explore if it would make sense to link the two events or cross-promote them.

- Sunny Claire from EEN / the Chamber told the group that the European Information Centre at the Chamber is marking Europe Day on 5 May at the Library of Birmingham. The Chamber is keen to involve other organisations who may wish to promote their European work.

It was agreed that Birmingham City Council would have a stand and participate, including promoting the new Benefits of Being in Europe publication.

It was agreed that any other organisation who would like to be involved should contact S.Claire@birmingham-chamber.com

8. Thematic part of meeting: Presentation on the work of EEN (Enterprise Europe Network)

- Sunny Claire gave overview of EEN service and how it supports SMEs in Birmingham and the wider region.
- EEN is led by Innovate UK supported by BIS. 90% of businesses they work with are smaller ones with less than 10 employees.
- It offers a range of free services and information on:
 - EU legislation
 - EU funding
 - Market intelligence and research
 - Business partner services e.g. agents, distributor, JVs.
- They also organise local events, seminars, workshops on Europe e.g. finding partners, getting your product to market.
- The EEN network has recently opened offices outside of Europe particularly in emerging countries – Shanghai and Beijing.
- Sunny mentioned the 'EU SME Centre Programme' this is a programme for SMEs wanting to access the Chinese market.
- Partnership opportunities database: They have numerous case studies. On the database there are also lots of EU opportunities for companies looking to expand or seeking partners e.g. wholesalers etc.

- The wider EEN network has a number of sector groups – The WM is active in the automotive and creative industries groups.
- EEN also has a role in providing feedback from SMEs to the European Commission on barriers SMEs encounter in Europe. For example, some SMEs encounter quality standards issues. EEN WM would welcome working with MEPs and their offices can signpost SMEs experiencing these types of problems to EEN WM.
- Within the Midlands EEN is delivered by a number of organisations:
 - Bham Chamber – lead on commercial aspects of EEN's work
 - Coventry University Enterprises – research side (e.g. H2020)
 - Derby and Nottingham Chamber (East Midlands Chamber) pharmaceutical and retail and services
- Sunny stressed that he would be keen for EEN to work with partners from the Europe Association to organise joint events, participate in missions of inward business delegations etc.

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- Next meeting will take place in June – date to be confirmed.
- A suggested theme is that of the Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels office with a couple of partners presenting how they make use of the office and also to discuss potential areas for local partners to come together to undertake joint work through the Brussels office. James Woodcock said that ISL would be happy to talk about their experiences of the Brussels office if that would be helpful.