

THURSDAY 14 JANUARY 2010

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Present

Howarth of Breckland, B. (Chairman)  
Inglewood, L.  
Jones of Whitchurch, B.  
Kirkwood of Kirkhope, L.

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**Memorandum submitted by COSLA**

**Examination of Witness**

Witness: **Mr Serafin Pazos-Vidal**, Brussels Policy Officer, COSLA Brussels Office, examined.

**Chairman:** Thank you very much for coming. You know that this is a meeting on the record. We happen to be in Brussels but it is like we were in Parliament. We will send you a copy of the transcript and if you can let us have it back as soon as possible with any corrections you might have. First of all I will introduce my colleagues so you know who they are. Then if you want to say who you are for the record - we have to do that technically - and you might want to make an introductory statement or go straight into the questions. Let us begin by saying who we are. I am Baroness Valerie Howarth, Baroness Howarth of Breckland. I chair the EU Sub-Committee on social policy and consumer affairs and I am a crossbencher in the House of Lords.

**Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** I am Archie Kirkwood. I come from South East Scotland in the Ettrick Valley. I was formerly a Member of Parliament for that part of the world until 2005 and came to the Lords in 2006. I am a Liberal Democrat.

**Lord Inglewood:** I am Richard Inglewood. I am a Conservative and come from Cumbria, which is just south of the Scottish border. I was an MEP for ten years and was a member of John Major's Government.

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** I am Maggie Jones. I came into the Lords in 2006 and I am a Labour peer.

**Q246 Chairman:** We are really grateful to you for coming from COSLA. We have had a range of views about the effectiveness of the ESF and particularly how effectiveness is measured. How effective do you consider the ESF has been in your regions with regard to both soft and hard outcomes? By “soft outcomes” we mean when people make improvements but you cannot necessarily measure it too well. We are finding a lot of those sorts of indicators. What barriers have you identified to delivering an effective ESF and how is it best assessed?

**Mr Pazos-Vidal:** Thank you very much. I will introduce myself first and then follow with an introductory statement. My name is Serafin Pazos-Vidal. I am the Head of the COSLA Brussels office. COSLA stands for Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. First of all I would like to thank you for inviting COSLA to this very wide ranging inquiry, which we have been monitoring for a while and have previously sent a written submission. Just by way of introduction, COSLA is the national voice of the 32 Scottish councils both nationally and internationally. We have been working for many years and long before I started on this myself on the debate about EU Cohesion policy, of which ESF is one crucial part. Our involvement is at both strategic and practitioner, local expert level. In Scotland, at a strategic level we have been actively involved with the Scottish Government in the preparation of the current programming period. We also nominate two of the programme Monitoring Committee members as the representation from Local Government. At practitioner level one of our crucial tasks is gathering the evidence from our experts on the ground as to how they feel the programmes are going, what is working and what needs to be improved, not just in the short-term period but from a longer-term perspective. I would also like to mention at a European level, which is my core area of expertise, COSLA is, as I say, the European

representative of the 32 Scottish councils and a member of the European Local Government umbrella, CEMR, which is the European version of COSLA. COSLA happens to chair the taskforce of several national associations of local authorities which are currently looking at the future of cohesion policy and what it means for local authorities. I hope that my intervention will be useful to give you a wider European flavour of what our counterparts from other countries are thinking on that front. Having said that, I will qualify my intervention by saying that, given the background I have just explained, I hope you will understand that my responses on a practical level will be less detailed than the wider EU policy or strategic policy issues, which is my core area of expertise. Initially we had anticipated bringing one of my colleagues who advises us at local level - Malcolm Leitch from Glasgow - but it was not possible. However, the written submission we sent and other submissions we are sending to the Scottish Parliament and European Commission are based on wider expertise we have gathered at local level. We are happy to provide more evidence after the meeting, if necessary. Coming to the question of how effective do we consider ESF on both soft and hard outcomes, in hard terms we believe that ESF has added value at local level and has been effective because it allows local authorities to become engaged from the outset. A crucial element in the Scottish experience - the COSLA experience - has been that the ESF has been building from a bottom-up approach that has ensured local priorities and concerns have been taken into account. On the soft side there is a wide consensus among practitioners that ESF has meant that for partnerships that want information at local level it has ensured they create a stimulus, they pull them together, they give them a reason to sit down and look at a given timeframe. The multi-annual programme is one of the key advantages of ESF and the Structural Funds in general. That is a key element that we would like to outline. I am pretty sure this is the case in other parts of the UK, but certainly in Scotland we operate the ESF at a local level via the Community Planning Partnerships and

part of the operational programme is processed that way. That is very much within the core area of Local Government, partnerships involving all members of the community to try to make sure that ESF responds to the local priorities. If I could just mention, and it has been mentioned in the evidence provided to this Committee, about £40 million of ESF has been allocated over a period of two years until 2010 to the Scottish Community Planning Partnerships. The 13 CPPs are the local areas on which the programme has been prioritised in order to ensure there is a certain amount of critical mass, particularly during this round where the resources are more limited, by contrast of the wider range of projects and numbers of areas that were benefiting in the previous period but which is not possible this time. CPP is a way of ensuring critical mass but at the same time that there is enough community local level buy-in to the projects. From initial research, because that is what we are able to provide at the moment and certainly my colleagues from the Scottish Government will provide a more qualified answer, we understand that as of 31 March 2009 there were 26,800 participants who were being supported by CPPs, which was a few hundred beyond the actual target for the whole period, which is a very good indication that things work well when you get community buy-in and local authority input from the outset.

**Q247 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** Was that 26,000?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes, 26,800.

**Q248 Chairman:** Are those people who have become engaged in the programme?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes. I can provide you with the full report. In terms of barriers, there are always two sides. I am sure this is not the first time and will not be the last time during this inquiry when you hear of problems about complying with requirements, that the perception or understanding at local level that ESF programme implementation tends to be more compliance driven, basically trying to meet the rules rather than achieve outcomes. Fairly or

unfairly, that is a worry widely expressed not just by my colleagues in Scotland but certainly also by my colleagues from other countries with whom we work closely. There are endless reports at local level about the large amount of time they have to spend discussing very small, trivial elements of expenditure, that is, to assess whether they are eligible or not. That is something that worries practitioners very much because it disables them from having a clear focus on what they are trying to deliver. Along the same line there is also a very common example that sometimes doing verification checks takes about 100 days of staff time. Perhaps not all the time or in all cases, but that is an often repeated concern. There is the issue of whether this is due to the rules or a cautious interpretation of the rules by the Managing Authorities. There are differing opinions on that front. What is clear is that one way or another, this is a problem. Given that the compliance checking is done in a consecutive phase, unless you have one side of the project totally cleared you cannot go to clear the next section and that creates a backlog which is very difficult to solve, particularly when we are sometimes talking about projects that have a very limited cash flow, and that creates a big problem for them. As I say, that is an often-repeated comment.

**Chairman:** This might be the moment for you to pursue your question, Lord Kirkwood.

**Q249 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** We are starting to recognise that there is a concern from other strands of evidence the inquiry has received that compliance costs and audit trails are onerous and there are still ongoing Scottish problems in terms of the current programme. It is important for us to understand how we got there. Is this in any way to do with what appears to me to be a different approach north of the border in Scotland from the co-financing model? There was much more of an individual project model, certainly in the early parts of the scheme, as distinct from England and Wales perhaps where there is co-financing much more structured around a department and formal agencies of Government. Do you think that the difficulties of accounting and compliance that the Scots are now facing resulted from the

different systems between north and south of the border? It seems that the potential here is quite serious in that you may be facing a claw back if we understand the situation properly. It would be good for us if you could briefly try and capture what it is that has produced the extent of this problem. It is a common complaint, but what produced it in your own circumstances in Scotland?

**Mr Pazos-Vidal:** It is a question that perhaps goes a bit beyond my domain of expertise - it is a question for a practitioner - particularly because I do not necessarily have the other elements to compare with the rest of the UK. What I would say is that the same problem happens not just in Scotland but also across similar programmes in other Member States of the EU. Certainly there is a problem in some circumstances, on which I am not qualified to elaborate, and exactly the same happened in similar Member States with similar Operational Programmes. There is a problem there and that was what I was referring to in the previous statement. It is a question of whether it is a matter of the EU rules or the fear of the Managing Authority being too open about the implementation of the rules and, therefore, applying them in a very restrictive manner because there are audit issues down the line and they want to be sure that in a few years there will be no problems on that front. Having said that, some of the proposals that we put at the end of our written submission to try to streamline that in terms of more flexibility, more trust on the Member States to use their own audit issues, therefore easing the problem of having too restrictive an interpretation of the rules. On this we are happy the Commission has got the message. Certainly because of the economic crisis there have been a number of reforms of the Regulations but whose impact in this programme will be limited because, for instance, in Scotland half of the funds from ESF are already committed, but that has opened the way to ensure that these kind of issues do not happen in future programmes. We also understand from the Commission that where there are issues

that for practical reasons they are not able to amend the regulations during this period, they are going to be in the reform package that they will present soon.

**Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** Do you think you could get Mr Malcolm Leitch to write about half a side of A4 on how he sees the problem, and on the second half of the sheet indicating whether there are any wider implications that might be appropriate for further consideration in the course of our inquiry? That would be good. Are there lessons to be learned with a wider dimension to them? That would be very valuable if we could ask for that to be submitted when it is possible.

**Q250 Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Going forward we have got these new aspirations for the sustainable social market economy and the smarter, greener economy, and I suppose one question is do you agree with those aspirations, but I have a feeling you are going to say “yes”. If you do agree with them, how do you see that working so they do not just get added on to the shopping list so that they just become an extra set of priorities rather than a new and more focused set of priorities? Do you think they are deliverable?

**Mr Pazos-Vidal:** I am going to surprise you. Perhaps I would not say totally “yes”, but perhaps a qualified “yes”. It is true that particularly since the inception of the Lisbon Agenda, creating a new sustainable market economy, a smarter, greener economy has been the *raison d'être* of ESF. We have to say it is quite clear that the Scottish case is one of the examples where the essentials of ESF are Lisbon earmarked, which is a classical example of Western European Objective 2 regions – I am talking about the Lowlands and Uplands specifically. That is something we totally agree with - this is a very timely question to raise in this inquiry - however, we are quite concerned about the issue of moving ESF away from what it is at the moment, a structural policy or structurally delivered fund, a territorially-sensitive or affected fund, to a purely Lisbon fund. It is hardly a secret that this possibility has been evoked in the policy discussions here in Brussels over the last six months or so and that is something we are

concerned about because in practice that would mean moving ESF away from cohesion policy, perhaps targeting it to groups and organisations, but without having a territorial link, a local link, and essentially being managed at Member State level. That is something that not just COSLA but also most of our colleagues, our counterparts across other countries, totally disagree with. It might be true that these kinds of funds or EU delivery instruments have to be set in place in the next financial period and this has to be prepared by the current Commission, and it is quite likely that the EU 2020 Strategy, which is the successor of the Lisbon Strategy, and whose deadline for submissions is tomorrow, will have to include that. We believe that this should not be done at the expense of the ESF as a Structural Fund for the reason I mentioned at the beginning, the issue that ESF has a great value in targeting its aid to a given local area with a specific problem. For instance, in Scotland the funds are targeted to areas which have a comparatively high level of deprivation, as measured on a European scale, where there is a big problem with skills and the social cohesion of the community. That is the additional value of ESF as a Structural Fund. That is where it has proved its value as opposed to, let us say, national one-size-fits-all social policy or social inclusion policy. That is why we are open to the discussion on its limitations but are concerned with the issue of moving ESF away from Structural Funds. You mentioned green skills as well.

**Q251 Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Before you go on to the green skills, you said in your introduction that you had been working with colleagues across the EU, I do not know how broad a group of colleagues, on the whole issue of the future of the cohesion policies. Is what you have just described the wider view or are there other things you want to add about what you feel the wider view is?

**Mr Pazos-Vidal:** That is one part that we understand is being discussed at the moment. As regards the purposes of ESF, that is a clear element. There is a clear suggestion that the ESF is advocated by some strong sectors of opinion to be moved away from the Structural Funds

to a Lisbon fund or an EU 2020 fund to help growth and jobs, but not in a territorial way as it is happening at the moment. Our view, which we expressed in our submission is that, if anything, in the future there should be a consolidation of funds, a simplification of funds, not a proliferation of funds. Moving European funds away from the communities is certainly something that we would be concerned about. This is the overall feeling within the taskforce which we happen to chair at the moment, made by the Association of English Local Authorities, the Germans, several Baltic associations as well as from other countries ---

**Q252 Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** All local authorities?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes, national associations of local authorities, organisations like COSLA as regards to Scotland<sup>1</sup>. That is something that we are currently working on.

**Q253 Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Green skills?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* I understand that the submission of the Scottish Government dwells on that matter and provides a detailed explanation, but in terms of the medium-term we believe that is one of the elements in which ESF, a territorially effective ESF, can make a difference. That is for three reasons. It can provide training and can train new skills to people who in the “old economy” could not find their way into the market. Second, this immediately raises the issue that ESF clearly shows additionality, it is actually doing something that is not being done otherwise, and, thirdly, it helps the wider economic development and modernisation of the regions. Green Skills is one of the elements that the Scottish economic recovery plan is very keen on. That is something we support. Having said that, and on the issue of the future, we have to be realistic about the possibilities of ESF to deliver change. Whatever the future EU financial perspectives will be, the eventual allocation of ESF to the UK or parts of the UK will always be small, so that is why it is important to target things that are easy to class as

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<sup>1</sup> Note by witness: and our equivalent opposite numbers in the UK and the EU.

additional, not just because of the ingrained benefit that this measure will make but also to be able to argue against those voices that are not in favour of that kind of intervention. It is essential to prove there is delivery and that it is making a difference, but we also have to manage the expectation of what you can get with the very small amount of funds available.

**Q254 Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** It was flagged up in one of the questions so can I just probe this other issue. Are we spending enough resources on the hardest to reach? Have we got that balance right? Have you got any views on that?

**Mr Pazos-Vidal:** The general principle that the practitioners always endorse is the fact that the hardest to reach should be the priority, but there is a perennial strategic debate of whether there is a combination of the priorities and the resources available in the circumstances. It is true that the hardest to reach are the ones that take more time to be brought back into the economy, to make them labour market-ready, but, of course, that is something that always depends on the circumstances. Coming back to the issue of additionality, it is true that it is much easier to prove additionality if you focus intervention on the hardest to reach because it is much more difficult for national programmes of one-size-fits-all to target those kinds of groups or individuals because they need additional and specific measures over those that the average population needs. That is an issue worth bearing in mind. To a certain extent that is what is happening in the Scottish CPPs. There is a related issue that is worth mentioning, which is there is always the problem with the hardest to reach groups that might be endlessly linked to ESF but never entering employment, the labour market at large. In that regard we would like to highlight a modest case of best practice, which is the system that we have set up at CPP level in which you track the evolution of that individual through the whole process even after they have finished support from the CPP, so you track their whole employment history to see if there is actual progress.

**Q255 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** For how long do you follow them?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* I do not have the specific details but I understand it is throughout the whole process.

**Q256 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** And into work?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes. Certainly we will be happy to provide you with this additional evidence.

**Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** Thank you.

**Q257 Chairman:** COSLA certainly believes that Scotland should continue to receive ESF money and, as you know, there has been a view in the UK Government that the richer nations should not receive the money but it should go to poorer nations, and there is other evidence we have heard which is that if we are going to achieve cohesion right across Europe then maybe we all need to be involved in some way. What do you think the ESF offers that cannot be delivered through the domestic programme and, therefore, why do you think COSLA is pressing still to retain its funding?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* The immediate answer in practical terms, and I hinted at that in the previous part of my intervention, is the issue of multi-annual programming. That is an insurance, so to speak, to the individual local authorities and individual funding managers that there will be a stream of funds for seven years plus two. That is something that is quite difficult to guarantee even in the most stable country because there can be big, unexpected upheavals. Even if there is a small amount of money allocated you know you can plan ahead and that ability to plan beyond an electoral cycle is something that is one of the key assets of the Structural Funds, including the ESF. Then there is the second issue, which is very important, which is that if it is true to its beliefs and focuses on providing additionality, ESF can help to innovate, to adopt new approaches that otherwise would not be adopted just

because the local or national programmes never thought about them. We are happy that there is recognition in the Commission that in the future there should be more room for experimentation. In general terms, when local practitioners are trying to learn from projects from others on delivery methods or initiatives in other countries, in an ESF programme in France or an ESF programme in the UK, the ESF allows this as its programmes tend to be more similar across Member States than the same national measures even if they address the same target groups. This comparability allows them to learn from others and that is one of the key advantages. There is an issue that sometimes it is not necessarily appreciated; although there are not necessarily are there going to be less funds available at European level, there is the risk, (and thus the emerging arguments that we hear often repeated over the last few months), that what will happen is that rather than having less funds there will be a transfer of them to other issues. Instead of having Cohesion Funds or Structural Funds, in the future we will have more or less the same amount of EU money as today but being targeted to transport or research directly but, as I say, losing the local partnership element. That is why COSLA is still making that case, as are all of our colleagues in other countries, because sometimes it is not just a matter of the money but what values you try to defend. There is a final issue that is worth raising in those terms and that is the issue of the internal market and the support that the internal market requires. I am sure you are aware of the Barca Report that was commissioned last year by the European Commission. Basically one of the key elements of the Barca Report is the idea that having such a vast, complicated and integrated Internal Market, such as the European Union, requires some policy and financial instruments to accompany it, both to address the issues created by the internal market itself - that is a whole area because of increased global competition having led to an increased number of jobless and so on – as well the gaps that the internal market itself cannot address and, finally, the existence of an internal market cannot shield you against international competition anyway. Since we also live not

just in a European internal market but also in a globalised world there should be some resources and policy instruments that are equally important at a European level to support that wider interaction.

**Q258 Chairman:** Mr Pazos-Vidal, I am told that you were due to leave at 3.15pm because you have to go to something else. Can you spare us another five minutes because we started a little late?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes, no worries.

**Q259 Lord Inglewood:** You have touched on the angle on which I wish to question you, which is about the simplification of the Structural Funds as a whole and you have talked about what fund you think there might be there, but I would like to ask you to go into a little bit more detail. It has been suggested to us in the United Kingdom that it might be better for the Structural Funds, and possibly other funds too, simply to be a mono-fund which could then be deployed in all kinds of directions according to need. Is that something you have thought about? Is it something you think will be a good idea? If you are not so sure about it, currently is there overlap between the existing funds, Structural Funds in particular, and if there is not overlap are there gaps that fall between the two?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Starting with the last question, in terms of overlap perhaps that affects the ESF less against the ERDF than perhaps ERDF with the Rural Development Fund, but it is always a perennial issue and practitioners routinely have to sit round the table and discuss if that part of the project can be financed by ESF or ERDF. Of course, there is this cross-funding element but it is difficult to use it because there are fears of unintended consequences and in terms of audit, whether that can be right, even if it is in the rules. That is something that affects ESF less than the other funds but it is an unnecessary complication. We certainly agree with the idea of what in euro-speak we have called lately a “single fund”, the idea of a

fund that can be used on a territorial basis regardless of whether it is for ERDF types of activities, Rural Development-type of activities.

**Q260 Lord Inglewood:** Both on people and on things?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes. It depends how you operationalise that. That is the key element. It is not going to solve all of the problems but there is almost universal agreement that it will solve many disadvantages and wasting of time because you currently have to look in detail at which part you can finance with ESF and which part with ERDF. Doing away with that kind of difference for practical reasons and giving an institutional dimension is quite difficult. However that is something that should be pursued, particularly now that we are looking into the future. At the very least we would like all the European Territorial Cohesion funds in the widest sense of the term, to be aligned. By that I mean on the kind of expenditures, to ensure the technical rules are as similar as possible. Even if the funds might be formally different for legal and political reasons, the way of processing the claims should be as similar as possible, particularly when we are talking at local Government level where people dealing with European projects may be one or two people per local authority in most cases. The more funds you have got, even if in theory you can benefit from them, the more difficult it is to implement. That is what we call a one-stop-shop. The idea will be to have as few funds as possible but, if not, at least having this one-stop-shop. It remains to be seen if that can be done, but it is something that should be considered. You are right, it is also equally important to see how you structure the fund but at least by our proposed approach you will be doing away with that kind of minutiae.

**Q261 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** This is a very brief wrap-up question. There is a theme coming from the evidence that has been presented to us that perhaps in the early days people were really very careful about where the matching funds came from so that there was

genuine additionality over and above established practices in Member States. Can you just give us a thumbnail sketch of where the matching funds' additionality comes from in terms of the co-financing in Scotland right now and whether people are being as assiduous in making sure that they are not just grabbing the European money and using it how they like without staying within the rules of additionality?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Experience shows that the more localised and more specific the scale of intervention, the easier it is to do for additionality. Of course, if you use the small amount of ESF as part of a wider economic reform programme or wider delivery mechanism within a national process without doubt it is much more difficult to assess additionality. We believe from our experience that approaches like the CPPs in Scotland can prove additionality.

**Q262 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** CPPs are?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Community Planning Partnerships. That is something where we believe you can prove additionality. The other idea, which I am sure you have come across in this inquiry, is the issue of counterfactual impact assessment. Essentially it is a delivery tool, and it is far from perfect, that enables you to check if the initiative you are doing is making a difference compared to another area that is not receiving European funds. The more localised you do the interventions, the easier it is to compare and measure.

**Q263 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** Easier?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Easier, yes. As I say, if you put ESF as part of a larger pot, which sometimes has to happen, and perhaps now in the crisis there is an element of that, it is much more difficult to measure. Many of these policy battles that we have been fighting here in Brussels have been on that issue. In conclusion, I would say that is why we are firm believers in the issue of local partnership because that is the only way where, first, you can make a difference on the ground but, second, argue for the benefit of the policy.

**Q264 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** Can you evaluate whether in Scotland's Operational Programme there is a higher proportion of what I would call community projects at a community level rather than at a bigger or wider level? Is there more scope for niche players who are addressing very specific problems at ward level or travel-to-work level areas?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes. Part of the ESF in the Lowlands and Uplands is addressed through CPPs, but not all because the Government, the Managing Authority, has to weigh different priorities, differing issues. There is also a part that is handled in a more businesslike fashion. The position of COSLA at the time was we agreed that the Lowlands and Uplands of Scotland (LUPS) area had certain priorities and competing spending priorities. We would like the CPPs not just to be a test case for the first couple of years of the period but also to be extended for the whole period. In terms of making a difference in interpreting additionality we believe there will be that essential CPP element in any future arguments for continuing European Social Funding in Scotland. That will be our key point. Also linked to that there is an emerging idea about the Local Development Frameworks and that is something that is now being explored and research undertaken by the Commission and that is something that goes along with our ideas. The moment you look to specific problems in an area and you target the funds to that area, that is when you can measure the results very well.

**Q265 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** What is the difference between a Local Area Framework and an Operational Programme?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* The Operational Programme reflects the notion of Cohesion Funds being a Regional Fund, regional delivery policy. We believe, at least in the case of Scotland and similar-sized cases, it is possible to go more local than it is. The Government have mentioned that in any funding in the future there should be as much scope to go more local and to ensure that more funds are more locally targeted than was perhaps the case in the past.

**Q266 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** To go back to the original question, can you put your hand on your heart and say the evidence available to you is that there is genuine additionality insofar as Scotland is concerned and COSLA is evaluating and monitoring the programmes?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* So far as the experience gathered by COSLA, by practitioners and the people who are involved in the CPPs, they believe there is additionality.

**Chairman:** But is belief enough?

**Q267 Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope:** Are they independently evaluated? Obviously the people who are running these programmes will want to believe there is additionality naturally.

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* There are several rounds of evaluation. I am sure the Scottish Government will dwell specifically on the annual rounds of evaluation being undertaken. The Commission is now finalising the evaluation of the previous period in a much more sophisticated way than in the previous evaluation rounds. Yes, there are significant evaluation processes being undertaken.

**Q268 Chairman:** Is any of that available yet?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* One for sure.

**Q269 Chairman:** Are they in Scotland?

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* I am sure it is finished.

**Q270 Chairman:** Can you find out and if there is could you let us have it because it would be useful.

*Mr Pazos-Vidal:* Yes.

**Q271 Chairman:** I know we have got to let you go because you have got to go somewhere else. Thank you very much for taking the trouble to come and see us and talk to us. Is there

anything you would have wanted to have said that we have not allowed you to say or asked enough questions about?

**Mr Pazos-Vidal:** I am sure there is because this is a very wide issue and it is a moving target. To conclude, I would say that for COSLA it has been a privilege to be part of this inquiry. We will come back to you with the additional evidence as requested. You have to understand that as a political organisation we have key principles which reflect clearly solidly adopted political views and there are practical issues that are the result of the expertise we gather from our experts and the whole question, given the time in which we are living, is bound to evolve very soon and that will affect our assessment.

**Chairman:** Thank you very much indeed.