

When you're in a hole, stop digging!

Our Government is a good example of what happens if you ignore the old adage - it is floundering in a sea of Brexit mud.

The problem with getting stuck in mud is it can be almost impossible to climb out. The more you scramble to safety, the more you get sucked down. And if there is no one on hand to haul you out, you eventually run out of energy and slip to oblivion.

'Brexit means Brexit and we are going to deliver it' must rank alongside Neville Chamberlain waving a piece of paper and proclaiming 'Peace for our time' almost 81 years ago. A few months later, Europe descended into war.

Since then, level headed thinkers and politicians have created long lasting peace and friendship.

So why are a handful of powerful politicians hell bent on undoing forty years of relative stability, economic growth and mutually beneficial cooperation?



One can't help recalling how in years gone by, individuals plotting against what was considered best for the country would be locked in the Tower facing whatever grizzly end was deemed appropriate at the time. How times have changed - I suppose for the better although some may not agree!

If we must leave the EU, then do it in a way that does not destroy everything we have built over the past 40 years, pandering to the whims of extreme Brexiters claiming 'the will of the people' from a referendum smeared with lies, misuse of funds and questionable use of social media.

Even now, new questionable Facebook activities have come to light. The Guardian reports that 'hugely influential' Facebook advertising campaigns appearing to be from separate grass roots movements for a no-deal, are secretly overseen by employees of a lobbying company which represents some prominent leave supporting MPs. As much as £1m has been spent promoting sophisticated targeted adverts aimed at heaping pressure on individual MPs to vote for a hard Brexit. Now, the matter is to be investigated by the Information Commissioner's office.

Since the referendum, the Government's own advisors, many in commerce and industry, a number of MPs and - of course - British citizens in the EU along with EU citizens living and working in the UK, have warned and appealed to them, which is why it is hard to comprehend why our Prime Minister and her supporters simply ignore the damage they are doing to our country and its citizens.

For us, after all the lobbying, presentations to Parliamentary Committees and written evidence based reasoned argument and proper analysis, key rights are still at risk. Discussions with our own government have been few and far between. We can only conclude that our own Government does not care.



Meanwhile, the rest of the world continues to be entertained by the antics of the politicians in our Parliament. Parliament is an institution of which we should be proud, rather than an assembly for ridicule. Pity Mr Speaker can't send some of them to the Tower!

It's more important than ever to write to your MP. Tell them to do everything they can to make sure our Government does not destroy our lives. Of course, we do not have a budget to advertise this on Facebook!

Find the your MP here: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps>

Meanwhile, will we or won't we?

Timing this issue of your newsletter has been particularly difficult. A 'newsletter' should contain at least some 'news' and useful information. This was supposed to be the March issue, but you won't have escaped noticing that Brexit matters for the past few weeks have been somewhat unpredictable. There is little point publishing 'definitive' information only to find it has all changed immediately the newsletter is released.

So to avoid giving you old news, we have waited until things become a little more stable and we have a better idea of where we might be heading next. It is all on TV anyway!

It does seem very odd that just a few days ago, the Prime Minister addressed the nation saying the whole debacle was nothing to do with her but the fault of everyone else - MPs and Parliament in particular. She complained that Parliament had not produced any alternative options. Yet now Parliament has taken control, she says that the Government will not necessarily act on its recommendations anyway. How can she blame Parliament for having no alternatives and then refuse to listen if they do?

Having 'reached out' to the opposition parties - something she should have done two years ago - Labour now says that she appears to have no intention of taking their proposals on board, abandoning any of her 'red lines', or deviating from her narrow chosen path. *So it's 'my way or the highway'.*

It must be the same thinking that claims a second referendum is 'undemocratic' while Mrs May's Meaningful vote can come back to Parliament umpteen times until she gets the result she wants.

Two years on and all we know for certain is that 'Brexit Day' has been put off and we can take some comfort that Parliament says it will not countenance 'no deal', so should we still worry about it?

Of course, we hope 'no deal' does not happen. But it makes sense to wear a life jacket even you don't believe your boat is about to sink, and the same applies to Brexit.

Maybe applying for resident status has been a pain and changing the driving licence a bureaucratic nightmare, but having the right documents is not exactly a bad thing, even if Brexit gets called off altogether and they are no longer a necessity.



As we have seen so often, nothing about Brexit or this Government is certain. Even as I write this, things are changing, and it now looks as though we may even be heading for a long delay. Or it can all go horribly wrong and we crash out because the EU has had enough!

Or perhaps we can all look forward to another year or two of wrangling and uncertainty and, of course, yet more ECREU newsletters.....

The 'Untouchables'...

But one positive message has come out of the recent chaos - the EU says it is looking to do more to protect the rights of its citizens in the UK and UK citizens already settled in the EU.

European Parliament President Antonio Tajani said on Twitter: 'I met representatives of European citizens living in the UK and EU27. Their rights are untouchable: the European Parliament stands ready for the political battle to defend them.'

This is in no small part down to the sterling efforts of British in Europe, which took on the task of face-to-face negotiations on behalf of us all, most recently meeting with Mr Tajani.



ECREU is an active participating member of British in Europe, the coalition of citizen's groups in the EU This vital work needs your support, so please click [HERE](#) if you are able to help.



What about my vote?

We get regular emails from members angry that they have lost the right to vote after 15 years living in the EU. We have been campaigning on this since long before Brexit, but the Government has been very slow to act.

Now, 'British in Europe' and 'the3million' have joined with 'Another Europe is Possible' to launch a new web site dedicated to getting our votes back.

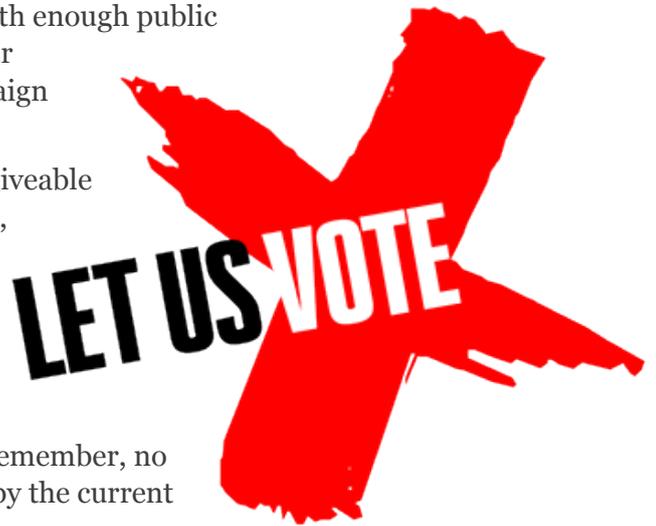
Up to 10 million UK citizens living abroad are denied a vote by the current rules. 'letusvote.org.uk' says: 'Whatever your views on Brexit and party politics, it is fundamentally wrong that so many millions of people whose lives will be deeply affected by developments at Westminster are currently denied a vote.'

'Let Us Vote' is campaigning for all British citizens, living in the UK and abroad, to vote in general elections and referendums. 'With enough public pressure, we aim to get a majority of MPs to sign up to our pledge, and to get a commitment to supporting the campaign into the manifestos of the main political parties.'

If there is a second Brexit referendum, it would be unforgivable if once again, those living in the EU were disenfranchised, so please support this campaign by going to www.letusvote.org.uk and signing the petition.

Then write to your MP and ask him or her to sign up to the pledge. The site makes this easy, just enter your last UK postcode and it will find the right MP. Don't forget to say you are a former resident of the constituency and remember, no matter long you have lived abroad, you are represented by the current MP in your last UK constituency.

<http://www.anothereurope.org>
<https://www.the3million.org.uk>
<https://britishineurope.org>



So here we are, back where we started almost three years ago...

Perhaps one benefit is the fact that everyone should now know the truth of what Brexit - in whatever form - will really mean for our country, its businesses and its citizens. Demands for both a second referendum and rescinding Article 50 are getting more support.



You can't have missed what became the biggest Government petition ever with more than 6 million signing up to rescind Article 50. But our 'listening government' was quick off the mark emailing every signatory to say it had no intention of acting on the petition, even before it had been discussed by Parliament.

Dave Spokes - davespokes@ecreu.com

Ring Fencing Citizens' Rights

Last month, many ECREU members supported the British in Europe initiative to persuade MPs to vote for Alberto Costa's amendment calling for the Prime Minister to ask the EU to jointly agree to ring fencing the citizens' rights part of the Withdrawal Agreement - whatever happens with Brexit.

Thanks to the efforts of everyone involved, including all the member groups of BiE, the amendment passed 'on the nod'. Although representations have been made, it is for individual EU states to come out in support. So BiE is now actively lobbying MEPs.

Even at this late stage, it is still important that we keep plugging away at this, so please do your bit by writing to the MEP in your last UK constituency and to the MEP where you now live in the EU.

You can find your MEP from this link: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/map.html>

What do those at the top really think?

Sometimes, we all wonder if anyone listens to us or really cares. We thought we should try to try to find out, and this is a very encouraging and supportive reply from Sir Keir Starmer:

At the end of February Labour and the House of Commons instructed the Government to pursue full ring-fencing of citizens' rights, so that even if the UK leaves the EU without a Withdrawal Agreement the chapter on citizens' rights stays in place.

The right of citizens to go on living their lives as they planned is vital and rights should not be used as pawns in negotiations. It is simply intolerable that there is still uncertainty so close to Brexit day about residency rights, access to social security and family re-union in the event of a no-deal Brexit. And Labour will keep pushing the issue.

I would like to play tribute to groups like Expat Citizens Rights in the EU for making sure the voice of citizens has been heard in the negotiations. Keep up the good work.



What about 'no-deal'?

For months now, we have been advising you to make preparations for a possible 'no-deal'. But along with all the horror stories of what it could mean for our future, we have always added that most sensible MPs can see the folly of it and only our own Government seems intent on using it to 'blackmail' MPs into support Mrs May's Withdrawal Agreement, despite the implications for the country and its citizens, both at home and abroad.

This month, just as predicted, MPs voted 'no' to 'no-deal'. So does this mean everything will be fine regardless and we can all relax? Up to a point - the legal position remains that if the UK cannot reach an agreement, then there are just three other options: extend Article 50, rescind Article 50, or leave by default with no deal.

There are hard-line leavers who give little thought to the country's citizens and would be happy to see the latter. But Parliament, and now the PM herself, appear to be moving to do everything possible to prevent it, even voting in the last few days to approve a delay if the Government fails to sort out the mess it has created.

So although 'no-deal' is still the default if all else fails, we can take some comfort that MPs are taking our problem seriously and most seem ready to fight to stop it.

So our advice remains the same.... 'Don't focus on all the gloom and doom. Be prepared but don't panic!'

Life after Brexit in France



Our friends at Facebook group RIFT (Remain in France Together) have analysed the Decree from France which covers our rights in the event of no deal. This is RIFT's report outlining the processes and the conditions UK citizens must meet to continue living in France. If you have lived in France more than 5 years or less than 5 years, you can find links to much more information here:

More than 5 years: <https://remaininfrance.blogspot.com/2019/04/no-deal-decree-and-nitty-gritty-of-your.html>

Less than 5 years: https://remaininfrance.blogspot.com/2019/04/no-deal-decree-and-nitty-gritty-of-your_4.html

If you've lived in France for over 5 years and hold a carte de séjour permanent

You can breathe a sigh of relief. You'll be applying for the carte de résident longue durée, and this will be a straight exchange, with a seamless transition from one status to another. The decree states that you'll only have to produce your passport, and your current carte de séjour. No mention of a photo, but it may be that they intend to use a digitalised version of the existing one.

If you've lived in France for over 5 years but don't hold a carte de séjour permanent

You'll need to apply for your new status, according to the process which is still to be put into place. You'll need to provide as evidence:

1. your passport;
2. a photo that meets official standards;
3. a carte de séjour if you have one (for example, an initial CdS that you obtained as an EU citizen); or
4. if you've never had a carte de séjour, proof of the date of your arrival in France;
5. proof that you have resources that are 'sufficient to maintain yourself', not including social security benefits. Note that this will apply whatever your status is - whether you're working, retired, or otherwise inactive;
6. if you don't have any form of carte de séjour, proof that you have health cover.

What are 'sufficient' resources?

The decree states that the sufficiency of resources is looked at taking account individual circumstances but that in no case must this be more than the level of RSA (Revenu de solidarité active) - currently 559,74€ per month for someone living alone, and 839,62€ per month for a couple. There are other figures for families with children - see the government web site <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F22117> for details.

It also states that if your resources aren't deemed to be sufficient, a favourable decision may nevertheless be taken if you own your own home or live rent-free.

If you're in receipt of AAH (l'allocation aux adultes handicapés) the sufficient resources criterion will not apply.

Is this good or bad?

It's a mixture, and there are some clarifications needed before we can properly answer that question.

For those over 65, on the whole it's good, as it reduces the level of 'sufficient resources' from its current (and higher) level of ASPA down to the lower RSA level.

For those who are working or self-employed, it means that you'll have to justify a certain level of resources for the first time - previously you'd have been required only to show that your work was 'genuine and effective'.

If you receive AAH, it's also good news, as it means that you won't have to justify sufficient resources at all.

There is, though, one thing that we need clarity on. Taken literally, the wording of the relevant article of the decree (Article 11) implies that you must 'have' sufficient resources, not that you have to 'have had' them for 5 years as you would for an EU carte de séjour permanent or for a regular carte de résident longue durée. We want to get more clarity on this and an understanding of what's intended, so we'll be taking this up as soon as possible with the Ministry of the Interior. Until then, please don't read too much into this, and continue to put your dossiers together to cover a 5 year period.

When must I apply?

Although you have the legal right to live in France for up to 12 months from the date of a no deal Brexit, you must apply for your new card within 6 months. We don't yet have details of the new application process but we expect there to be an online application form which would then be forwarded to préfectures for processing.

How much will my new card cost?

A first application for a card will cost 100€ for everyone. Renewals will be charged at the same rate as for 'normal' third country nationals.

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For those with LESS than 5 years residence

These provisions apply only to those who were living legally in France on the day of a no deal Brexit.

If you've lived in France for less than 5 years, you will have to apply for one of several residence cards, depending on your particular circumstances. Note that even if you already hold an initial carte de séjour as an EU citizen, there is no automatic exchange for a new card - you must make a complete new application for a new status.

Common provisions

Whichever of the following cards you're applying for, you'd need to provide the following proofs alongside the specific items mentioned for your particular card:

1. your passport;
2. a photograph that conforms to official requirements;
3. your current carte de séjour if you have one; and
4. if you've never had a carte de séjour, proof of the date of your arrival in France.

Students

Students will apply for a carte de séjour pluriannuelle marked 'étudiant' - the length of the validity of the card is determined by the length of their studies. As well as the items listed under 'Common provisions' they must provide:

1. proof of enrolment in an educational establishment;
2. if they have been on the same study cycle for more than a year, proof that studies are 'genuine and serious' and that they are regularly engaged in them.

Employed people on a CDI (Contract Duration Indeterminée)

You will apply for a carte de séjour pluriannuelle marked 'salarié' which will last for 4 years. As well as the items listed under 'Common provisions' you'll need to provide:

1. your contract of employment, which must be a CDI;
2. a pay statement less than 3 months old.

Employed people on a CDD (Contract Duration Déterminée)

You will apply for a carte de séjour temporaire marked 'travailleur temporaire'. This will be issued for one year at a time. As well as the items listed under 'Common provisions' you'll need to provide:

1. your contract of employment;
2. a pay statement less than 3 months old.

Self-employed people (including microentrepreneurs)

Self-employed people must apply for the carte de séjour pluriannuelle marked 'entrepreneur/profession libérale'. This will be issued for 4 years. As well as the items listed under 'Common provisions' they must provide:

1. proof of registration with RCS or Chambre de Commerce or Métiers or of affiliation to SSI (la sécurité sociale des indépendants);
2. proof that they have sufficient resources to maintain themselves, excluding social security benefits (eg prime d'activité). Note that this is a new criterion and different from the 'genuine and effective work' criterion that's applied to EU citizens. The decree doesn't specify that the resources must come from your business, but they must exist.

What are 'sufficient' resources?

The decree states that the sufficiency of resources is looked at taking account individual circumstances but that in no case must this be more than the level of RSA - currently 559,74€ per month for someone living alone, and 839,62€ per month for a couple. There are other figures for families with children - see the government web site <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F22117> for details.

It also states that if your resources aren't deemed to be sufficient, a favourable decision may nevertheless be taken if you own your own home or otherwise live rent-free.

If you're in receipt of AAH (l'allocation aux adultes handicapés) the sufficient resources criterion will not apply.

Job seekers

Two groups of people would apply for the carte de séjour temporaire marked 'recherche d'emploi ou création d'entreprise'. One comprises those who've graduated from a French higher educational establishment in the year before their application; the other comprises those who are unemployed, having been employed in France for at least 3 months in the year before their application and as long as they are registered as a job seeker and have health insurance. If you're in the second of these situations, as well as the items listed under 'Common provisions' you'll need to provide:

1. proof that you're registered as a job seeker;
2. salary slips showing at least 3 months working activity in the previous year;
3. proof that you have health cover.

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Everyone else with less than 5 years residence (including retired or otherwise non economically active)

You must apply for a one year carte de séjour temporaire marked 'visiteur', renewable each year until you reach 5 years. Note that this card doesn't allow you to work in France. As well as the items listed under 'Common provisions' you'll need to provide proof that you have resources that are 'sufficient to maintain yourself', not including social security benefits (for example RSA) and proof that you have health cover.

What are 'sufficient' resources?

The decree states that the sufficiency of resources is looked at taking account individual circumstances but that in no case must this be more than the level of RSA - currently 559,74€ per month for someone living alone, and 839,62€ per month for a couple. There are other figures for families with children - see the government website <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F22117> for details.

It also states that if your resources aren't deemed to be sufficient, a favourable decision may nevertheless be taken if you own your own home or otherwise live rent-free.

If you're in receipt of AAH (l'allocation aux adultes handicapés) the sufficient resources criterion will not apply.

When must I apply?

Although you have the legal right to live in France without a residence card for up to 12 months from the date of a no deal Brexit, you must apply for your new card within 6 months. We don't yet have details of the new application process but we expect there to be an online application form which would then be forwarded to préfetures for processing.

How much will my new card cost?

A first application for a card will cost 100€ for everyone. Renewals will be charged at the same rate as for 'normal' third country nationals.

Is this all good or bad?

It's a mixture, to be honest. The biggest change is that with less than five years residence in France and in a no deal situation, you'd be almost totally subject to national immigration rules, albeit with easier entry conditions than regular third country nationals. All of the cards listed in the ordonnance, the decree and on this page derive from France's immigration law.

The level of 'sufficient resources' required is based in all cases on RSA, whereas for regular third country nationals it's usually based on SMIC, which is considerably higher.

If you currently hold a carte de séjour as an EU citizen, there is no process simply to exchange this as there would be for those who hold a carte de séjour permanent - you would have to make a completely new application.

For those who are self-employed, it means that you'll have to justify a certain level of resources for the first time - previously you'd have been required only to show that your work was 'genuine and effective'. But those resources don't have to come from your business - you can use other income to make the total up to the required level if you don't take enough from your self-employment.

For those over 65 applying for the 'visiteur' card, on the whole it's good, as it reduces the level of 'sufficient resources' from its current (and higher) level of ASPA down to the lower RSA level.

If you receive AAH, it's also good news, as it means that you wouldn't have to justify sufficient resources at all.

After five years ...

After five years of residence, you will be entitled to receive a 'carte de résidence longue durée'. In order to apply for this you'll have to show sufficient resources, the details of which are exactly as described above. This would be the case whatever your situation - i.e. whether you're working, self-employed, a student, retired or otherwise non economically active.

Remember that these provisions only apply in the case of a no deal exit. France has not yet published the details of its implementation of the provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement that would apply in the case of an exit with a deal.



If you live in France, RIFT is the place to go for up-to-date and accurate information and advice.

Go to: <https://www.remaininfrance.org/>

Returning to UK and needing care?

ECREU's Margaret Hales and her colleagues in Spain attend regular meetings with Consular officials and others concerned for the well being of UK Citizens which often reveal information of interest to others. One such meeting was with a Social Work Specialist Advisor for the FCO who discussed her work with vulnerable adults and the homeless at Heathrow airport.



This may seem somewhat removed from Brexit, but in fact, proved very relevant to anyone falling on hard times and particularly the elderly with serious health issues. "It is not unknown for an elderly person suffering disability or mental illness to find themselves alone, unable to sell their property, and needing to return to the UK," explained Margaret.

"Unfortunately, it may not be so easy in the present climate. Since 1994 British people cannot just return to the UK and expect help with benefits - unless they have been deported."

To gain most means tested benefit - if out of the UK for more than three months - there is a Habitual Residence test. This could mean a wait of at least three months before being eligible to receive Benefits. For vulnerable people with no friends or family, this would mean destitution.

Anyone wishing to return to a specific area and needing housing and benefits, a number of questions are asked: local connection; friends; family; did you work there; how long have you been out of the UK; how long did you live in a specific place; if you didn't; why do you want to go there? Of course, if you have been away for 20-30 years, the local connection may not be relevant.

For non-urgent health treatment you may need to prove you are living in the area. To register with a GP, an address is needed,

If a Care home is required immediately on return to the UK, you must be present for assessment by the local authority and this can't begin until after the person has arrived in the UK. You must have a Local Connection and proof of staying, plus 'significant care needs' that no other person can deliver.

Assessment questions are about tasks of Daily Living, for instance, does the person have mental capacity? Mental Capacity is assumed until proven otherwise.

Finally, a Local Authority may not have a duty to provide care. ***The British authorities are not always there for you!***

Gatwick: Staffed by team of volunteers 9am-4pm. Meet and greet, provide food and drink and help with onward journey.

Heathrow: Manned by qualified Social Workers Mon-Fridays 9-5 pm, in Terminal 3.

These teams cannot find accommodation, do medical repatriation or arrange hospital or ambulances.

Glasgow and Manchester each have a 30 hours a week chaplaincy and can provide out of hours support.

All this assistance is by referral from the British Consulate.

Weary in Spain

We are as weary in Spain as everyone else - we still don't know what our future holds. We watch Westminster in dismay and we know not what will happen to us when we lose our European citizens' rights and freedoms with some sort of Brexit.

Even the British Ambassador, in his message to us Brits in Spain, confesses to be unclear about the future.

However there is still some hope here in Spain which is in the middle of two election campaigns - the General Election (and Regional elections in Valencia) on 28 April and the Local elections on 26 May. The outcome is uncertain with a coalition in Madrid likely.



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But there are very sympathetic noises coming from the Spanish. Look at the site for the Spanish government <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/brexit/howtoprepare/Paginas/citizens.aspx> and see that the new Royal Decree gives us 'certainty' over the 'transition' period. This means that if Britain takes away its support of paying for our health care (in a 'no deal' scenario) the Spanish government will (short term) pay for pensioners health care totalling more than €200 million. But here's the rub! *You must have been in Spain and registered before Brexit Day* (whenever that is).

The British Embassy and its Consulates are working hard to help British citizens living in Spain. Two initiatives have been very welcome:

British Consulate in Alicante informs British Associations and Charities and Lizzie of ECREU was there! The latest regular meeting in Alicante was led by Sarah-Jane Morris, Consul and Mercedes Alonso, Provincial Councillor Alicante.

Recent developments:

- The Spanish Royal Decree giving health care during transition period to Brits who were in Spain before Brexit.
- New Foreigners' ID cards will be issued for those legally resident here before Brexit day (issued over the next 18 months).
- Continuing resources of up to date information for associations to help them in their work.

The system of application for funding for associations has changed to an online process <http://www.diputacionalicante.es/>. The Red Cross has a plan/project specific to gender violence working with the Alicante Minister. Call Elena at the Consulate on: 965 144 618.

Note: The Consular office can accompany a victim to the courts, hospital and police station.

Residencias will have new system and there will be 21 months for the change. This is obligatory. You will not automatically be permanent and need to have lived here for 5 years.

Consultation about Government web sites with residents in Spain by the British FCO

ECREU was one of the groups asked to help the FCO and the Spanish Embassy in a project looking at how useful and accessible the gov.uk web site was to residents. Member Steve, living on the Costa Blanca, worked with staff in London identifying omissions and any problems. He was able to identify that the situation about Wills was not covered. If anyone notices ambiguities or errors in the site please let ECREU know (margarethales@ecreu.com).

The Embassy has updated its handout list of web sites and addresses where information on Living in Spain can be obtained. Download your copy here: <https://www.ecreu.com/pdfs/handout-living-in-spain-web.pdf>

ECREU in Spain has been busy talking to journalists and disseminating useful information through the press and media. The 'A Punt' programme on the Valencian station Radio Focus, Costa Blanca News and Euro Weekly have been most helpful.

However, there is great concern that many Brits are taking a very last opportunity to buy a property and move out to Spain. Sales to Brits currently top the charts in the coastal areas. We ask all our members to spread the information that (if there is time) proper registration should be made as soon as possible and that if there is a Brexit of any sort, new arrivals *after Brexit transition day* will not have the same rights as those already here.

Finally, the airports of Spain, particularly Alicante, have enormous throughput of Brits on holiday and British citizens returning to their Spanish homes. (Of the 12.5 million passengers through Alicante in 2018 some 5.5 million were British).

The EU has warned that if there is a Brexit then 'the consequences will be clearly visible from day one. There will be additional checks at the border and the authorities could ask for more specific information on the purpose of their trip. and means of subsistence. You have been warned!

Margaret Hales - margarethales@ecreu.com

**Worries
about Brexit?
Get them off
your chest...**



Let us know and we'll give you a platform
Send your thoughts to: contact@ecreu.com

Thoughts Of A Brit Back In Blighty

(By ECREU member Denis Turner - formerly living in the Tarn and then The Manche - still living over the water, just, on the Isle of Wight)

The year 2018 is not one I care to remember. It was full of worries for us health wise and in our daily living. It was a year that saw us pack our bags and return to the UK after 14 very happy years in France, mainly, thanks to the uncertainties of Brexit. It would seem that we arrived back to a divided country, but as we look back at France we see divisions there also. After many years of relative calm we seem to be in a maelstrom of disarray, confusion and chaos.

There is no consensus in Westminster as to the best way forward and the usual pragmatic and commonsense approach to major problems seems to have deserted our politicians. 'The people have spoken' we are told, but I tend to agree with the statement that we should take more care with referendums - democracy depends on it.

Referendums can sow division from the bottom to the top of a nation as can clearly be seen from the last one we had.

We often have mini referendums in our household and we usually agree about the big issues such as buying a house or a car but when we come to sign on the dotted line we have backed off on more than one occasion when we have discovered that the car we already owned was better than the one we thought about buying or the new house purchase was not the sound idea we first thought it was. We did not want to be worse off so decided to stay with the status quo.



Of course, it is easier to agree when few people have to decide but the decision making process becomes much more difficult as the amount of people involved increases. Many will be happy to take a risk in the hope that throwing money, (usually other people's), at a problem will eventually put everything right.

However, I am glad that I do not have to take the decision when it comes to the future of our Nation and, when that decision is made, only time will tell whether our younger generation will be better or worse off. As somebody living with incurable cancer reading that the government has gone onto a war footing with troops on standby for a possible declaration of martial law and that the NHS has hired a jumbo jet to bring in medicines, plus has also bought 5,000 freezers to store it in, it does nothing for my confidence. The money could have been better spent.

As George VI said in his Christmas 1939 broadcast to the Empire and a country facing the uncertainty of war: "And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year; Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

I am a retired police officer and my wife is a retired solicitor. Before we moved to France we researched our position thoroughly and did all the right things, both when we left the UK and when we arrived in France. We informed tax and health authorities in both countries and imported our UK registered car to ensure we complied with French laws. Shortly before we left France I acquired a French driving licence due to the fact that I hit the grand old age of 70, (the French refused to grant me one before that as I was the holder of a UK issued EU driving licence and did not need one).

more.....

The shock of the referendum result still haunts us now and we realised that we could not risk remaining in France as the future was suddenly a fog of uncertainty. I count myself lucky that we were living in France when several serious health issues hit me all in a matter of months. Had it not been for the French health service I would not be here now and I remain eternally grateful to it. Our biggest shock was the realisation that the UK was prepared to renege on long standing agreements retrospectively without any protection for those who thought such agreements were set in stone.

During our time in France I got to know Brian Cave, one of the founders of ECREU who we sadly lost last year. My first contact was a result of the winter fuel farrago which has never been resolved for the Brit abroad, (we are still owed hundreds of pounds but little did we know that was just the start of the misinformation and lies that would affect life in the EU). Brian always responded to my emails and although I never met him, I got to know him well for the principled and caring person that he was. I was very saddened to read that he passed away last summer.

However, Brian would be appalled as we all are to see just how much, with few exceptions, our representatives in Westminster have chosen to bend and manipulate the truth in order to drag the country out of a system that has given us relative security over so many years. At a time when we need friends we are turning our back on our closest neighbours, this is madness.

LBC's excellent presenter, James O'Brien, gave the following response to a caller when asked why he had voted Remain. His answer was very powerful:

"I looked at the observable reality of my life, my entire life, and decided it was better than the unknown. The freedom of movement that myself and my children would continue to enjoy.

"The economic growth, hopefully with a little bit more of leftist redistribution of the wealth that we generate, but the economic growth which saw us continue to punch way above our weight.

"The co-operation on issues of security and possibly military which would ensure the continuation of the peace that has been unprecedented in Europe since 1945, when Winston Churchill first talked about a United States of Europe, but obviously since the Treaty of Rome in 57, when freedom of movement become essentially enshrined in European law.

"All of the things that I voted for were, in the simplest of terms Rob, the stuff I already had."

For those of us who have lived abroad and for those still living abroad add to that the peace of mind that the EU gives to those who have worked in the UK and have paid their dues to the UK, but wanted to exercise their rights as Europeans to port benefits such as pensions and healthcare accrued during their work life and retire to, what they see as a better way of life as they age.

On our return to the UK, I expected to be able to discuss the situation with neighbours and friends but it soon became apparent that few want to discuss it and there seems to be a fear factor that is extremely worrying. We are told that lies abound on both sides but the signs are that there is increasing concern amongst businesses in the UK and more and more are looking to move to Europe, either mainland Europe or to Ireland, to safeguard their future prospects. Politicians of all hues continue to fiddle whilst Rome burns and those with scruples that try to make their voice heard are soon shut down.

Having moved back to the UK it gives me no pleasure to inform you that there is little interest in the extremely difficult situation that Brits in the EU now find themselves in and there is absolutely no recognition amongst policy makers that once the UK leaves the EU, the EU will move from one size fitting all Brits to each EU country making their own policy that will directly affect Brits living in the EU.

I know from experience that Brits abroad need a united voice and Brian Cave was not frightened to make it heard where it mattered. Others have continued Brian's good work but, as Brian constantly reminded us back then, they cannot do it alone and now more than ever your voice needs to be heard to counteract the lies being told back here that Brits abroad are a burden and that all they do is laze in the sun all day drinking beer.

I speak as somebody who still misses our life in France but also as someone who takes no pleasure in saying that we feel we made the right decision to secure that which is ours by birthright and by right of years of hard work.

Denis Turner

Need to contact someone at ECREU?

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At the time of writing, ECREU has 11,051 members in 28 EU countries:

Austria	Estonia	Italy	Portugal
Belgium	Finland	Latvia	Romania
Bulgaria	France	Lithuania	Slovakia
Croatia	Germany	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Cyprus	Greece	Malta	Spain
Czech Republic	Hungary	Netherlands	Sweden
Denmark	Ireland	Poland	United Kingdom

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