



PM Speaks Out For Expats

Speaking at her first G20 Summit early this month, Prime Minister Theresa May said: “.....I think it’s important that we’re very clear that I expect the status of British citizens in the other countries in the EU to be guaranteed, as I expect to be able to guarantee the status of EU citizens living here.”

Encouraging words..... we will do our best to make sure they are turned into action!

It’s all a matter of priorities

Organising a group with the aims of ECREU is a question of priorities. Of course, thanks to you, our members, we know the key issues that concern you, but this information is of little use if we can’t get your message to the people who matter.

So our primary concern is making MPs aware and getting them on your side. But here we come across the first big problem – while many of us are able to vote and therefore have access to an MP back in the UK, that MP will almost certainly have a local constituency of 60 or 70 thousand or possibly more. So the problems of a handful of expats living abroad are hardly going to get priority.

The only solution is for the UK Government to adopt a similar system to France, Italy and elsewhere, with MPs dedicated solely to expat citizens. So we are working to persuade our Government to establish expat constituencies.

However, such a revolutionary change could be some way off, and there is resistance to this just as there is to scrapping the 15 year voting rule.

You may think it odd that some of those in power seem to think it inappropriate or unnecessary for their citizens abroad to have representation, but perhaps part of the answer may be apparent from a meeting I attended early this month. It was a gathering of ageing former university graduates. I should add, we attended as guests of a friend.

Guest speaker was an eminent QC, whose speech hardly touched on what the subsequent potential problems Brexit could mean for people like us.

So after the speech, I raised our concerns about EU regulation 883/2004 on the ‘co-ordination of social security across the EU’ and what might happen to health care and the continuance of the State Pension and associated benefits if or when Britain leaves.

It astonished me the degree of ignorance and misunderstanding amongst this audience. It was obvious that quite a few of them had absolutely no comprehension of our situation. Many were second home owners and some well heeled, one with property in Suffolk, France and Regent’s Park, no less!

One argued that our pensions came from Britain and would not be affected. He clearly had no idea that my question was not about his professional pension, but about our State pension. The 2014 Pension Act clause 20 would permit the Government to freeze it if we were no longer in the EU.

I then suggested we would become foreigners after a Brexit. Someone retorted ‘No we wouldn’t, we would still be British.’ Perhaps that says it all..... complacency of the British Middle Class abroad and a complete lack of understanding of what it means to no longer be a European Citizen when living outside the UK.

If this attitude permeates our leaders and politicians in the UK, then ECREU needs another priority... we must argue for the retention of EU regulation 883/2004 on the statute book so far as British Citizens are concerned, should we eventually leave the EU. I got the impression that the QC agreed with me.

Brian Cave - briancave@ecreu.com

The Never Ending Story

In our last Newsletter, I outlined the successful outcome of my First Tier Tribunal appeal which resulted in the DWP apologising and providing long awaited documentary proof of it's lies. We may have lost our Winter Fuel Payment, but the fight to expose the manner in which contrived statistics were used to justify it is far from over.

We now have the written evidence of the Met Office's exchanges with the DWP while the DWP's responses to the appeal trashes it's arguments for not using a regional methodology for determining who should and who should not receive the benefit.

I believe there is now a prima facie case for accusing IDS of deliberately misleading and deceiving Parliament. So I have made a request for questions to be asked in the House. I am now asking for the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to make available to MPs, all emails, letters and studies both interim and final, in respect of the 'Temperature Test Policy' which lead to the definition of winter as a season lasting five months; the inclusion of the French Tropical territories in the calculation of the French National winter temperature; and the definition of a binary Winter Fuel Payment eligibility criterion that denies this old-age risk benefit if an alleged national winter temperature exceeds that of SW England by more than 0.02°C.

I am also asking for any documents in support of the decision to remove Mayotte from the list of locations in the Tropical Zones of the World inflating the national average winter temperature of France, to be made available.

Finally, I think MPs and all of us effected should know why the proposals to use regional temperatures was withdrawn by the DWP in favour of using only National average winter temperatures.

Loss of WFP may be a minor irritant to some, but to others, it has caused much anxiety. For example, we have a member who suffers from MS and finds herself stranded in a part of Spain with snowy winters. She cannot sell up and move into town because of the property crash.

But quite apart from personal hardship, the fact that Parliament appears to have been misled and citizens lied to really must be brought out into the open. Watch this space.....

Roger Boden - rogerboden@ecreu.com

ECREU member Linda Johnson Lee, who lives in France, has submitted a Freedom of Information request for the DWP to reveal more detail of its communications with the Met office and the methods used to assess average temperatures. Copy and paste this link for details: www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/winter_fuel_payment_for_uk_citiz

Representation in Parliament

We need politicians on our side if we are to stand any chance of having expat concerns considered in any post Brexit negotiations.

The only real solution is to establish new expat constituencies with dedicated MPs, but there is some opposition to this. The Government wants to reduce the number of MPs and has asked the Electoral Commission to report on restructuring the constituency map, so this is probably the worst time to be asking for new 'expat MPs'.

In addition, there are some every real constitutional issues to take into account and the actual process of validating expats as being entitled to vote does have complications.

Please don't write to us about passport and National Insurance numbers etc. We already have those arguments - and other options - in the pipeline!

So although we are talking to those in power about expat MPs, we must accept that this will not happen overnight. Even the Government's promise to reverse the 15 year rule is not 'cut-and-dried'. There is opposition and no one can say where this sits in their list of priorities, especially when our Prime Minister is openly talking about planning Brexit even before any discussions about when and how.

Registered All-Party Parliamentary Group

ECREU will continue to press for proper representation in Parliament for expat citizens.

But in the meantime, we are making efforts to get our MPs and Peers to set up a registered All-Party Parliamentary Group, or a Cross-party Group with a brief to examine all issues affecting UK expats living in the EU and EU expats in the UK and report to Parliament or negotiating bodies as appropriate.

That way, we can place our concerns in front of those who matter even without dedicated representation.

So why did we bother writing to the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office?

Just because some in office are not interested does not mean we should not take action. It is important that those in power know how we feel, which is why we appealed to you to email the Electoral Commissions.

We did say that they might respond saying it was not their concern and from the replies you have shown us, we were right. But these opportunities for contact are very important if we expect anyone to sit up and take notice. Blanket emailing MPs does not work - they have systems in place to detect campaigns, so the message simply won't get through. That is why we also advised writing to the Cabinet Office.

With dedicated MPs, there may be more chance of getting our concerns for healthcare, pensions and our children's education etc at the top of the negotiating list.

New ECREU Face

Kathryn Dobson lives with her husband and three children in south west France where she runs the popular Living Magazine (www.livingmagazine.fr).



As well as being a passionate European and welfare campaigner, Kathryn is particularly concerned about the possible impact of political decisions on families and professionals living in Europe.

With more than 25 years' experience in marketing and communication, she also advises the ECREU team on social media and networking to ensure that the group's message reaches the widest possible audience.

Consultants

In addition to the founders and those listed on our web site 'About' page, we also have several consultants including a leading solicitor specialising in EU law and a senior member of a party women's group. They help us formulate policy and provide alternative means of contact with key people in power essential for our campaign.

Membership

At the time of writing this newsletter, ECREU has 2,382 members living in 21 EU countries:

Austria	Italy
Belgium	Luxembourg
Bulgaria	Malta
Cyprus	Netherlands
Denmark	Poland
Finland	Portugal
France	Romania
Germany	Spain
Greece	Sweden
Hungary	United Kingdom
Ireland	

This is the analysis of your concerns compiled from joining forms:

Retired 71%
One person households: 12%

Member's Concerns:

Healthcare 84%
Exchange rates 82%
Pensions 81%
Travel 75%
Votes for life 67%
Home ownership 69%
Inheritance rules 59%
National driving licence 56%
Retire in any country 52%
EU citizens live in UK 45%
Employment 28%
Run a business 18%
Register UK car 16%

Shows percentage of all members. Please note that 29% are below retirement age which will influence the percentages listed for Business and Employment

Views or opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of Expat Citizen Rights in EU or its officers

Editor: Dave Spokes - davespokes@ecreu.com

Distributed by: Expat Citizen Rights in EU

Web Site: www.ecreu.com

Copyright © 2016 Expat Citizen Rights in EU. Unless otherwise stated, all content is copyright of Expat Citizen Rights in EU. No part of this newsletter may be copied or reproduced in print, digital or any other form without prior written permission of Expat Citizen Rights in EU

email: contact@ecreu.com