



ECREU and the politicians

We have now sent letters to all 41 MPs who signed the Early Day Motion concerning the 'Status of British Citizens resident in the EU and EU citizens resident in the UK'. They are most likely to be sympathetic to your concerns about your future living in the EU. We have also written afresh to certain MPs and Peers with whom we already have a relationship via the Votes-for-expat-brits campaign.

It is most unfortunate that the Referendum result appeared almost simultaneously with the summer recess of Parliament. Many politicians are now away and although we have heard back from some who are happy to work with ECREU, we cannot expect a quick response from the majority. We will let you know when we do have more positive responses and will post a list on the web site.

Meanwhile, we have created a secure 'MP Zone' on the web site which includes statistics and analyses plus your concerns and emailed comments (anonymously). Politicians who are happy to support your rights are given a personal password for this information which we have asked them to include in any relevant submissions or debates.

We are also developing relationships with other expat citizen groups in Europe and we will keep you informed of what they are doing. We recently circulated information on the Bindman's legal case against the Government originating with a group in Southern France. They pleaded for funding and while we are content to let members have this information, ECREU itself operates without asking for financial support. But we do depend on your moral support.

ECREU's aims are directed to maintaining your Rights which come with membership of the EU. Certain Rights have an origin beyond the Regulations of the EU, some from the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. A most important Right in that document is the Right of all Citizens to be represented in their National Government - *Article 21 (i)*

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

The United Kingdom is a signatory to this Declaration.

If only British Citizens everywhere were represented in their Government!

The long running campaign, www.votes-for-expat-brits.com, has been beating this drum for many years and Harry Shindler has recently sent a submission to the United Nations raising our disenfranchisement. If we were properly represented then perhaps our Rights would be protected.

ECREU seeks to build a good relationship between the expat Citizen in Europe and the politicians in Westminster, the first-stage to achieving our final goal. Shouting and bellowing, demands and assertiveness are likely to be counter productive. You can see a reply from one Peer on the next page.....

Brian Cave - briancave@ecreu.com

We know from information you have provided, that your concerns are:

Healthcare 84%
Pensions 81%
Travel 76%
Votes for life 69%
Home ownership 68%
Inheritance rules 58%
National driving licence 54%
Retire in any country 52%
EU citizens live in UK 46%
Employment 30%
Run a business 19%
Register UK car 18%
Exchange rates 5%

Some have written to us raising worries about education and the future for young children in school or teenagers who have studied for entry to EU universities.

70% of our members are retired, so it is no surprise that Healthcare is top of the list of concerns. In that connexion we need more information on particular circumstances.

Let us know of those expats who live in care homes or need constant medical support. Our politicians need to know of such things

Please remember that large numbers of the elderly and those in greatest need do not possess computers – so please let us know the circumstances of others who cannot speak for themselves.

.....email to: contact@ecreu.com

Peer replies to ECREU appeal...

As well as MPs, we are also in touch with members of the House of Lords, and have already had a very encouraging and constructive reply from Lord Tyler. In particular, he offers some sound advice regarding Votes for Life and our attempts to secure MP representation for expats

Here are the key points of his reply to my letter introducing ECREU and its aims.....

.....I cannot stress too much the vital importance of your final comment: "the correct solution is constituencies for expatriates".

This is the ONLY rational solution but it is ALSO the only realistic political objective. Put yourself in the shoes of the individual Constituency MP; faced with the problems, concerns and special interests of some 75,000 constituents on his or her doorstep how many will give appropriate attention to a few dozen potential voters, with perhaps very different interests, living many hundreds of miles away? I had 87,000 eligible electors in my North Cornwall constituency: I have to confess that I was never even aware of the number of expatriates registered on our electoral roll.

This is why the Commons will be reluctant to simply remove the 15 year limit. Whatever may be the intention of the May Government I doubt whether individual MPs would give a majority to a simple extension to lifetime franchise eligibility, even if the practical problems you highlight could be easily overcome. Reverting to the place of birth would be equally objectionable as far as these MPs were concerned. The individual elector might never have been an adult - with a vote - in the constituency to which he or she was allocated. Why should the MP feel any obligation to represent their views? You are absolutely right to be DOUBTFUL!

With the increase in registration we foresee the case for specific expatriate parliamentary constituencies gaining ground. The logic is impeccable. The current review by the four Boundary Commissions is the appropriate context to press this case, with the norm of some 70,000 - 80,000 electors justifying a separate seat. Turning to the wider issues, your research is invaluable. As you know both the Conservative and Labour Parties have now given up on any chance of a truly effective full-hearted relationship with the European Union but the Liberal Democrats (and to a lesser extent the Nationalist parties and the Greens) have not. We are determined to do everything in our power to avert the worst results of Brexit, even to the extent of advocating remaining full members of the EU if an early UK General Election takes place before the eventual repeal of the Treaties. We are also seriously examining the case for Parliamentary approval of various stages of the negotiations. There could even be a further Referendum to approve - or reject - the final deal.

Meanwhile, I hope that you will feel reassured from the above that I and my colleagues are passionately interested in the concerns you express, and warmly welcome the ECREU initiative.

I will look forward to reading more about the plans; in the meantime I must urge you and all who wish to make progress to give maximum support to the expatriate constituency option.

I must stress that these are the views of one Peer and must not be taken as policy or a guarantee of what may or may not happen. But at least we can take comfort that our aims are realistic and that the structure and conduct of our campaign on your behalf is the correct way forward.

Meanwhile, campaign colleague and Berlin based Lawyer, Jane Golding, added that there would be an outcry if Na h-Eileanan Iar in Scotland, the smallest constituency in the UK with around 21,000 voters, did not have representation in Parliament. Now that some 250,000 overseas voters in the EU have registered, this argument cannot be ignored.

If we do leave the EU, British citizens abroad will not only not be able to participate in the democratic process in the UK, but they will also lose their right to participate in the democratic process at local and EU level in their country of residence. So disenfranchisement will become total - unless Brits abroad change their citizenship.

Brian Cave - briancave@ecreu.com

DWP ‘lied and lied again...’

Following a four year battle for the truth, the DWP has finally been exposed as having lied over statistics used to justify stopping Winter Fuel payments to British citizens living in Europe.

The DWP had refused a Freedom of Information request by ECREU’s Roger Boaden, to reveal the number of UK citizens living in Malaga who qualified for the payment, claiming it would be too complex and costly to extract the data needed to make payments on a regional basis.

But a First-tier Tribunal Judge disagreed and requested the DWP produce the figures. Now it has apologised and given the long awaited statistics to Mr Boaden.

Said Mr Boaden, a former senior conservative party official for 30 years: “It started with an ‘exclusive interview’ given to a national newspaper by Iain Duncan Smith. The interview was about the Winter Fuel Payment, but Mr Duncan Smith used it to attack British Expats saying it was ‘absurd and offensive that taxpayers are funding these payments for people who have retired to the Mediterranean and enjoy warmer weather’ and that paying the winter fuel payment was ‘an obscene waste of taxpayers’ money’.

“That seemed startling language from a Cabinet Minister responsible, at that time, for 28% of Government expenditure. “

So Mr Boaden used the Freedom of Information Act to try and uncover the actual number of pensioners affected and if the DWP could easily identify them from records.

His research revealed that there had been extensive discussions between the DWP and the Met office to do just that. For example, on 8 June 2012, the DWP wrote to the Met Office: ‘We would like to talk to you about the possibility of a regional approach’

Said Mr Boaden: “Their responses to the request from the Tribunal Judge proves beyond doubt that the DWP lied, and lied again, for four years. They also covered up the work done by the Met Office, which had told the DWP that an average temperature value for the period November to March could be calculated for each of the 22 regions across France, something the DWP subsequently rejected.

“Why did IDS comment to a newspaper, when he must have known the true figures? He knew perfectly well this interview would generate exactly the headline he wanted - ‘An end to madness of winter fuel cash for expats on the Costa del Sol’.

“I submitted a Freedom of Information request in January 2015, asking how many WFP claimants lived in the Malaga Province of Spain on the Costa del Sol.

It was my way of responding to IDS interview and finding out if it really was impossible to pay Winter Fuel Payments on a regional basis.

“The DWP has finally admitted that it knows there are 7,385 potential claimants living on the Costa del Sol.

“Thanks to my appeal to First Tier Tribunal, we now know that under IDS, the DWP lied and lied again to justify stopping the Winter Fuel Payment to needy UK pensioners living across Europe.”

Roger Boaden - email: roger.boaden@wanadoo.fr

Do you know your MP?

If you are registered to vote in the UK, then you have an MP. But do you know who he are she is?

As part of our campaign to inform and influence those in power, we will be keeping in close contact with key politicians we already know, or have identified as possible supporters of maintaining our expat rights.

But form time-to-time, it will help our cause if you also write personally to your own MP. So we will contact you occasionally asking if you can email or post a message. We will even give you a draft which you can use or adapt.

Please keep a note of your MP’s email and postal address. You can find it from a web search for ‘parliament mp list’ or use this web link:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps>

Brian Cave - briancave@ecreu.com

Where do our members live?

It is barely a month since we launched Expat Citizen Rights in EU - ECREU - and we already have approaching 2,000 members from 19 countries:

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

It is strength in numbers which will help make the politicians take notice, so if you have expat friends who share your concerns, please tell them about ECREU and let us know their worries.

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

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