

The triggering of Article 50

Now that Prime Minister May has triggered Article 50, the Government must act on the advice of its own Select Committees and the many thousands of citizens who have expressed grave concerns for their future after Brexit.

It is now incumbent upon our Government to make sure British citizens living in the EU do not suffer any disadvantage or loss of rights simply to score political points and that citizen's rights are not used as currency in any 'trade-off'.

Almost 8,000 members from 27 states have told us that they expect their Government to give absolute priority to securing the healthcare rights of all UK citizens working and running businesses in Europe, and for the thousands of pensioners who depend totally on the UK for their health, well being and pensions.

It is apparent that many people voted in the Referendum with no real understanding of the complexities and risks involved, because no one in Government told them. The refusal to accept the Lords' Amendments demonstrates that Parliament has once again put party politics and political self-interest above the needs of its citizens and our friends from across the EU who work in the UK, keeping the NHS and other business sectors running effectively.

In its second report, the Select Committee for Exiting the EU (5th March 2017) advises the Government that: '.....Continuing access to healthcare, on the same terms as they can now, is clearly a concern for UK nationals, including those of retirement age, resident in Europe. The Government needs to set out whether it will seek to continue participation in EEA wide schemes that enable UK nationals to receive healthcare in EEA member states.'

Many ECREU members have made it very clear that they don't trust the Government. The Government should understand that we will not sit back and hope it all turns out right in the end. We will be watching every move and will not hesitate to hold ministers and others to account.

D-DAY - 6TH JUNE 1944

British and American troops land on the Normandy beaches marking the start of the liberation of Europe.



B-DAY - 29TH MARCH 2017

The British Prime Minister triggers Article 50, the start of the UK's withdrawal from a unified Europe. The first date is one of the most momentous in recent history. Will the same will be said about the second?



'My MP is not interested'

We receive regular emails from members saying their MP can't help them or simply replies with what appears to be a standard letter supporting the party line. Many say that after the way they were deprived of their Winter Fuel Payment, they simply do not trust those in power to protect their rights after Brexit.

We would like to know if you feel you can rely on the UK Government to protect your rights, so we ask you to complete a short on-line survey. The results will help support our work influencing Ministers, MPs and Peers.

You will find a link to the survey form our web site Home page, our direct by clicking [HERE](#)

**Please
complete our
Survey**

EU Chief Negotiator is interested...

EU Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier said guaranteeing our rights is number one priority ahead of budget. He said he aims to agree key principles by the end of the year, leaving the whole 2018 to agree on details.

Mr Barnier was talking to the coalition formed by ECREU and other groups in the EU and UK. It may not give immediate answers, but it is a positive message from the key person on the 'EU side' and was given at a meeting with Coalition members. At ECREU, we are relieved Mr Barnier shares our concerns and is prepared to comment before negotiations.

'Guaranteeing rights as European citizens, will be our absolute priority from the very start', according to EUs Lead Negotiator

In the run up to the triggering of Brexit and the start of negotiations, some politicians of all sides from UK and around Europe have been quick to make unwelcome statements about the likely impact on UK citizens in the EU and EU citizens in UK. Most of these statements can be put down to posturing and point scoring - we are all accustomed to that.



What matters is what is in the minds of the key people charged with overseeing what happens next. One such person is EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier. Earlier this month, he made a speech to the Plenary Session of the European Committee of the Regions in Brussels. Unlike the complete lack of information from the UK Government and the refusal of Ministers to give real assurances to its own citizens, Mr Barnier's comments were positive and encouraging. Interesting that it takes someone from 'the other side' to come out in support of citizens. This is part of his speech:

Since I took up office on 1 October, I have met the governments of all 27 Member States. Over the past few weeks, I have started a second tour of the capitals to meet the governments again, as well as the national parliaments, trade unions and professional organisations.

During this period and for the duration of the negotiations, I will naturally work in close cooperation with the Council, the European Parliament and all other bodies and institutions of the European Union.

That is why – Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen – I am happy to be before the Committee of the Regions today. I often worked with the Committee when I was Commissioner for regional policy.

Unity is the first condition for reaching an agreement in the negotiations.

It is of course in our interest. But it is also – and I want to say this to our British partners – in the UK's interest. Because, at the end of the day, we will both need – you and us – a united Europe to reach a deal.

I would add another point: this unity will be even stronger when it is built on transparency and public debate. These negotiations cannot take place in secret.

We will negotiate in a transparent and open manner, explaining to everyone what we are doing. During these negotiations, we must also explain objectively what "leaving the European Union" means, for the withdrawing country and for the other Member States.

We need to tell the truth to our citizens about what Brexit mean EU's chief negotiators.

The second condition for reaching an agreement is removing the uncertainty created by the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

This uncertainty is first and foremost that of the four and a half million citizens:

- The Polish students who have access to British universities under the same conditions as British students;

more....

- The British pensioners who are resident in Spain and who benefit from healthcare under the same conditions as Spanish pensioners;
- The Romanian nurses and doctors who contribute to the quality of healthcare in the United Kingdom;
- Or the engineers from Italy, Germany or elsewhere, who chose to work in the United Kingdom, just like the thousands of British people who have made the same choice to work in Berlin, Rome or Vienna

We hear their doubts. We understand their worry, and we must act effectively in response.

Guaranteeing their rights as European citizens, in the long term, will be our absolute priority from the very start of the negotiations. Our watchword will be: “Citizens first!” The issues at play are complex, whether they are residency rights, access to the labour market, pension or social security rights, or access to education. We will work methodically on each of these points. We will not leave any detail untouched, and we are already working with all Member States on this.

It will take time, several months certainly. We must do serious legal work on this with the United Kingdom

But we can and we should agree – as soon as possible – on the principles of continuity, reciprocity and non-discrimination so as not to leave these citizens in a situation of uncertainty.

Next is the uncertainty for regional and local authorities and all beneficiaries of programmes that are currently financed by the European budget.

Who are we talking about? Beneficiaries of the European Social Fund, which – with almost €90 billion for all regions – helps those men and women who are least qualified and have most difficulty in finding work

- Beneficiaries of the European Regional Development Fund: we are talking about almost €200bn to support regions in economic difficulty and regions that are isolated
- Beneficiaries of the Juncker Investment Plan; almost €315bn of investments, thanks to which we are fighting climate change, for instance by financing a wind farm in Belgium. The plan also supports advanced infrastructure in healthcare and energy in the UK
- Beneficiaries of the Horizon 2020 research programme, which allows the EU to invest almost €80bn in science and industrial innovation, which helps us face up to the big challenges of our time

All these programmes :

- We approved them together, at 28, with the United Kingdom
- We finance them together, at 28
- We benefit from them, at 28

Each country must honour its commitments to each other. When a country leaves the Union, there is no punishment. There is no price to pay to leave. But we must settle the accounts. We will not ask the British to pay a single Euro for something they have not agreed to as a member.

In the same way, the 27 will also honour their commitments concerning the United Kingdom, its citizens, companies and regions. This is the mutually responsible way to act.

If I may quote one of the greatest men of European history – Winston Churchill: “the price of greatness is responsibility”. That is true for Britain and for us.

A third uncertainty created by the UK decision to leave concerns the new borders of the Union. I think particularly of Ireland. I was Commissioner in charge of the PEACE programme. I understand the Union’s role in strengthening dialogue in Northern Ireland and supporting the Good Friday Agreement, of which the United Kingdom is one of the guarantors.

That is why we will be particularly attentive, in these negotiations, to the consequences of the UK’s decision to leave the Customs Union, and to anything that may, in one way or another, weaken dialogue and peace.

Keep up the pressure on your MP!....

We need your help getting Mr Barnier’s message to MPs in the UK, so our Roger Boaden has drafted a letter which you can ‘top and tail’ into personal message to your MP or any others you have time to write to, either as an email or a letter. You can download a Word or pdf copy from these links:

Click for Word: www.ecreu.com/pdfs/mp-letter-rb.doc Click for pdf: www.ecreu.com/pdfs/mp-letter-rb.pdf

....Please help us keep up the pressure

Not all 'Bad News'

Occasionally, an encouraging response comes back from an MP or Minister. We reproduce below an email from Stephen Gethins MP in reply to an approach concerning preserving citizens right from ECREU's Roger Boaden. Mr Gethins is the SNP Spokesperson for Exiting the EU. We can be quick to criticise our MPs and it is true to say some appear to be indifferent to our plight to say the least. But Mr Gethins' email shows that we are not alone.....

Dear Mr Boaden,

Thank you for taking the time to get in touch with me on this very important issue.

The SNP has consistently argued for the continuation of Freedom of Movement irrespective of the UK's membership of the European Union. We believe that UK citizens living in the EU and as EU citizens living in the UK make a valuable social, political and economic contribution that must be allowed to continue. To show our support, some of my SNP colleagues, including Joanna Cherry QC MP, the SNP Justice and Home Affairs spokesperson, will speak today at a mass lobby of parliament taking place as part of the #1DayWithoutUs national day of action.

It is a disgrace that the UK government has repeatedly refused to provide a guarantee over the right to residency of EU nationals living in the UK in the nine months since the EU referendum and I was disappointed earlier this month when Conservative MPs voted down an amendment to the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill that would have ensured the residency status of the 3.3million EU nationals living in the UK.

As well as being a moral outrage in itself the Prime Minister's choice to use EU citizens living in the UK as bargaining chips in her forthcoming negotiations with the EU, I am concerned that this tactic may undermine the status of UK nationals elsewhere in the EU. I do not know of any other European government who had been reconsidering the rights of UK nationals, such as yourself, living elsewhere in the EU before the Prime Minister unilaterally made the status of EU nationals living here open to renegotiation.

The SNP is committed to arguing on behalf of UK citizens living in the EU and as EU citizens living in the UK. Please let me know how we can help your organisation.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Gethins MP

Member of Parliament for North-East Fife

Roger Boaden - roger.boaden@wanadoo.fr

Netherlands votes for tolerance - mostly...

As I write this, the Netherlands MP given the task of exploring possible coalitions has delayed until the end of the month. She invited talks with some of the largest parties, the centre right VVD, the Christian Democrats, the liberal D66 and centre left Green Party. She also invited the far right anti-immigration party PVV led by Geert Wilders despite the fact that the Prime Minister, VVD's Mark Rutte has said he will not work with them. The differences between the largest parties are still profound, so she has her work cut out to find points of agreement for the new coalition alliance.



Although the PVV gained seats in the election, it was by no means what Wilders had hoped for nor what many in Europe, after Trump and the British referendum, had feared. It was a very Dutch result, fragmented across 13 parties, with the VVD ending up with 33 seats, the PVV second with 20, narrowly followed by the CDA and D66 with 19 each, the far left SP & Green Party with 14 and the Labour PvdA with nine. Another six parties hold a handful seats each. By far the largest loser in the election was the Labour PvdA which dropped 29 seats compared to 2012. However, a number of centre left parties gained so this can't really be seen a big loss for the left.

more....

Although the far right PVV did not win the most seats, their campaign was nonetheless influential. Rutte co-opted some of Wilder's language during his campaign, suggesting that immigrants should "act normal", i.e. in line with Dutch norms and values, "or leave". That's actually not such a new thing; Rutte has made similar remarks in the past. The Green Party's Jesse Klaver ran a much more passionate grass roots campaign than the Greens have done in the past and spoke up against the elites. And the anti-Europe rhetoric may have prompted the Green Party and D66 to run such pro-Europe campaigns. Those two parties nearly doubled the number of seats they have collectively.

In the end, the result was -- mostly -- a vote for tolerance, Europe and the kind of balanced coalition government which has made the Netherlands such as a European success in the last decades.

Perhaps the best hope for a Britain which does trigger Article 50, for the European citizens who live there and for the British citizens who live in Europe, is to have a Europe that can see through apparent threat of other countries leaving, and instead see a future trading partner and ally.

That seems incredibly tough in practice, but having a stable Europe, which the Dutch vote is for, will be important if it is to succeed.

Robin Allenson - netherlands@ecreu.com

Protests at Rome Celebrations

As the EU celebrated its 60th anniversary this weekend, any festivities were overshadowed by pro and anti-EU protests and sentiment. Nowhere was this more true than in Rome, where thousands flooded the streets on both sides.

Anti-EU sentiment is far from being a uniquely British phenomenon and many of the declarations made by the Italians who took to the streets to protest against the Union echoed to an uncomfortable degree the feelings expressed by the 'Leave' camp before the Brexit referendum last Summer.



"We are here today because we think that the European Union is against the workers, against the people of Europe, so we are here to say 'No' to the European Union and the eurozone," said one.

"They have no democracy, they can decide everything without any contact with people," a third protester said.

Even those who criticised the populist sentiment sweeping Europe and the rise of the far right were critical of the Union, saying that the direction its policies have taken are to blame.

For those of us who feel we are being forcibly taken out of the EU, the sentiment is different – to us the Union is far from perfect, but the benefits (and potential future benefits) far outweigh the problems it has.

Although thousands of British expats joined the march in favour of the EU, it is telling that the only country in the EU 28 not to send official representation to the formal celebrations was the UK. Among British expats in Italy, this fact does nothing to reassure us of the will of the British Government to maintain its relations with the other countries in the EU. Further, to some, it underlines the sense of abandonment that many feel.

The concerns which have been expressed to me over the past few days have been many and varied. "I am concerned that our pensions will be frozen and we will lose the heating allowance," says one. "Will I need private healthcare?" asks another, adding "If so I may not be able to afford to stay." Another wishes to know if his family will be "torn apart" as there is concern over his right to work in the country after Brexit. The British Government offers no assurances, and the Embassy has no information to give any of these people when presented with their concerns.

I have been told repeatedly to simply apply for Italian citizenship. This will in fact resolve any problems I may personally have, but my thoughts go to those who have not yet earned the right to citizenship and who risk seeing the lives they have built shattered. My thoughts go to those young people in Britain who may no longer have the freedom that I did to study abroad, to live abroad, to work abroad.

The absence of British representation at the EU celebrations echoes the lack of dialogue between the government and British citizens currently living in the EU. ECREU is here to try to address that lack of dialogue, and to unite to give a voice to those who feel that in the current situation they have none.

This is the reason that I joined ECREU, and it is the reason that I believe in the Union. Please contact me with your concerns – after all, it really is true that we are better together.

Paula Clarke - italy@ecreu.com

Carte De Séjour Permanent

There has been quite a lot of ‘chatter’ in social media, of the need for UK Citizens living in France to apply for a Carte de Séjour Permanent.

Members in France might be interested to learn of the experiences reported to our Roger Boaden by new members from the Périgueux, who have just asked to join ECREU....



We submitted our CdS applications last week. I had managed to get all the correct paperwork together and they have accepted our application but we are not sure if there is any other scrutiny prior to us receiving the carte.

We got a little lecture when we met the clerk. He was effectively saying that the CdS was not necessary for two reasons. The first was that it will be some time before any real actions will be taken that might affect our situation and secondly, and more interestingly, he said the ‘official’ position was that the information coming from the French Government to the Départements was that there would be an agreement regarding the reciprocal arrangements for health and pensions.

This information was couched in such a way as to dissuade us from continuing with the application. We insisted that we wanted to go ahead with the application, and the rest of the process was pretty straightforward, with a little form filling and signing, but we will keep our fingers crossed until the cards arrive.’

... and from ECREU’s Dave Spokes:

We secured our cards last July. A friend with better French than I, telephoned for an appointment at Poitiers which took a couple of months. Also, we each had separate appointments on consecutive days.

But we both had similar experiences on the day; we were seen on time and came away with a temporary paper version. We were told the plastic ones would be available after about six months, but in fact, had a letter two weeks later saying they were waiting for us to collect.

The Carte de Séjour does make life here easier. Being the same size as a credit card, it is far more convenient than having to carry a passport everywhere. Remember, it is illegal to be out and about in France without a form of identification, which means your passport or Carte de Séjour, your driving licence may not work! It is also essential for booking in at hospital for treatment or seeing a consultant.

ECREU is talking to the Government in France seeking confirmation that the cards will still be valid after Brexit.

Some members have mentioned difficulties getting appointments of finding the forms to apply for a Carte de Séjour. If you are experiencing problems, please let me know stating when you applied and at which Prefecture.

Dave Spokes - davespokes@ecreu.com

Between a (Gibraltar) Rock and a hard place

Spain is seeing an opportunity to negotiate hard and has Gibraltar in its sights. Gibraltar has been British for over 300 years and Spain takes every opportunity to ‘get it back’. Reports quote Spanish diplomats saying that dual sovereignty of Gibraltar should be part of the deal. They say they will not sign any international aviation agreement that recognises the airport on Gibraltar. However.....



Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, continues to work firmly towards a successful set of agreements. He is aware that Spain has but a fragile recovery of its economy, and Brexit could create a new financial crisis, especially around the coastal regions of the country.

To support our own efforts, ECREU is working with its coalition partners including Eurocitizens, Bremain and Eupats to raise awareness of our situation in Spain. So how can you help?

Every little bit counts. Some joined the March for Europe in Madrid on the 60th birthday of the European Union in support of our friends the Eurocitizens, while others went to the March in London where members of our coalition British Citizens in Europe spoke at the rally. Thank you all.

more....

Now you can help again by contacting your local council in Spain, your Town Hall, your comarca or mancomunidad. We are a substantial part of the social and economic fabric of Spain and the last thing Spanish councils and Government wants is to lose us. Several councils and mancomunidades have already passed resolutions warmly supporting our continued life here. You can help yours by suggesting a resolution along these lines:

The decision of the British Government to leave the European Union has consequences that directly affect us as a society and as a town. For more than 50 years our British resident community has grown and been strengthened at every level. It has shaped our community not just by economic investment, but also by personal relationships.

This Town urges the Spanish Government to negotiate as soon as possible with the Government of the United Kingdom to reach an agreement that protects the social and political rights of British citizens who live in this area and indeed the whole of Spain, so allowing British citizens the continued right to work, to have free medical care, to vote and to stand in local elections, and to benefit from educational and social services.

This Town agrees to forward this resolution to the Governments of (Province) and (Region) and to the Governments of Spain and the UK Embassy in Spain.

If you need documentation to take to your Town Hall to start of such a conversation then contact ECREU by email to: spain@ecreu.com

Meanwhile - Do we British citizens living in Spain take the European Union for granted?

Have we forgotten that we live here, that our British qualifications are accepted, that we can combine our pension contributions from different European countries.... all by right because we are European Union citizens?

For the 108,000 British pensioners - the most UK pensioners in any one country in Europe - our European rights are supported by the European requirement for Britain to pay our pensions at the going rate and our health care, all from the funds we paid into. So Mrs May can put her hand in her pocket and keep paying us back our money.

Keep writing to your MP and telling him or her how important this link <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

Remember, even though you may no longer have a vote and may have lived outside the UK for years, the current MP where you last lived still represents you.

Margaret Hales - spain@ecreu.com

No answers from Brexit Committee

There are many retired ex-Service Personnel living in Europe these days and all are very concerned about the lack of response from their Government regarding what will happen to them after Brexit.

This was a recent point raised by an ex RAF Officer living in France: "I was appalled last week watching David Davis being questioned by the Commons Brexit Committee chaired by Hilary Benn. David Davis, to so many pertinent questions, just shrugged his shoulders as he had no answers. In particular he could give no assurances about medical cover at home or away. It is a complete car crash!"

This officer is not alone in his concerns and what appears to be the 'don't know, don't care, I'm alright Jack' attitude coming from London. Our service pensions as well as our private and State pensions could be at risk and our whole life is uncertain until somebody in UK makes some very important decisions (not to mention the heating allowance they 'stole' from us by fictitiously inflating temperatures in Europe compare to UK.

Brian Kemp - briankemp@ecreu.com





On the streets of London with our Coalition partners

On Saturday 25 March, around 200 UK citizens living in the EU made long journeys to take to the streets as part of the huge Unite for Europe march in London.

Many were from France and Spain but were joined by others from Italy, Germany, Greece, Austria, Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania and elsewhere – a truly multinational group,

all joined in the passionate belief that leaving the EU is a wrong step for the UK and our desire to make our voices heard.

The day of the march had been planned to celebrate the founding of the European Union exactly 60 years earlier, but was particularly poignant for two reasons – not only was it the weekend before Theresa May was set to trigger Article 50 but it was just a couple of days after the terrorist attack in Westminster.

After the Westminster attack, there had been a flurry of doubt about whether the march should go ahead, but go ahead it did, with the blessing and wonderful support of the Metropolitan Police. Under bright sunshine, the participants set off across Hyde Park to join the other marchers in Park Lane.

Along the way, they were joined for a while by Tim Farron, leader of the Liberal Democrat party [image 2 attached], who is particularly supportive of the plight of UK citizens in Europe and EU citizens in the UK.

Well over 100,000 people of all ages, nationalities, cultures and backgrounds, joined in the march. Our coalition partners and UK citizens from across the EU travelled to London to march not just for their own futures, not just on behalf of all friends and fellow group members who couldn't be there ... but also for the future of our children and our children's' children who if Brexit happens will never know the freedoms and opportunities that we have enjoyed. And as the marchers slowly dispersed at the end of an extraordinary day, they did so in hope and not in despair.



*Kalba Meadows, Coordinator, RIFT
Remain in France Together*

Thoughts from abroad

The British abroad have feelings of anger that their National Government are largely ignoring them. David Davis says they are consulting with the UK Citizens in Europe, but the coalition of the 12 groups have had no direct approaches from the office of David Davis 'Department for Exiting the EU'.

Those groups have approached the Government in its various forms - firstly directly to the politicians, who most usually reply with the use of the phrase 'the nation has spoken' - and especially, and I add effectively, to the Select Committees to whom ECREU and various members of the 12 coalition groups have spoken in person at Westminster.

more....

Protest marches have being joined by activists from UK citizens in the EU States in various cities, not just in London.

Most certainly the UK citizens in the EU feel threatened. This fear effects all age groups in various ways. Will they need to get work permits? Will the annual upgrades of the State pension cease? Even - almost to the absurd - will they be able to take their pets with them on trips back to the UK?

But that fear can be real enough for some. Some fears are most great.. Will the health care provision continue for pensioners? The uncertainty is eating into the soul of those who think too much.

There are those who have very small incomes and who are largely silent because they have no voice; they are deeply worried as the Pound slips lower and lower.

When some unthinking, uncaring person whether it be a politician or some brazen forum poster, blasts off about Britain being free again, many of us feel that such people are in fact 'willing' us to a form of imprisonment. And that far from being free, we are being constrained and imprisoned by the blinkered understanding seeping from their narrow constrained minds.

That Theresa May, who surely is at heart, a person of honour, has allowed herself to be manipulated by those around her.

Such fears are only more deeply entrenched by some media presentations, mostly taken in Spain. In one such recently, a British Resident there said.. "We are not foreigners, we are British" - such a remark was also made to me here in France by a visitor from England - not an ill-educated lager drinker, but a Cambridge graduate.

Sad that such an attitude of arrogant isolationism by so many in the UK has brought us to this situation.

Brian Cave - briancave@ecreu.com

Need to contact someone at ECREU?

If an email address is not shown in this newsletter, please email to: contact@ecreu.com

At the time of writing this newsletter, ECREU has 8,049 members living in 27 EU countries:

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

***Don't forget we are on Facebook!
Take part and post on to your friends...***

...Click the logo:



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

Association n° W862002237 registered in France and governed by the law of 1 July 1901 and the Decree of 16 August 1901 - email: contact@ecreu.com