



‘Lies, damned lies, and statistics’

Attributed to Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, there are three types of lies; “Lies, damned lies, and statistics”. Now, thanks to our current PM, it seems there is a fourth – ‘Brexit’.

According to our own Government and much of the UK media, citizens rights were all ‘done and dusted’ with the signing off of phase one last December. After all, our own Ambassador to France said so in his message in last month’s newsletter saying we will ‘be able to continue to enjoy all the rights that you do now after the UK’s departure from the European Union.’

Now we are first to accept that our Ambassador has to represent our Government, but it does seem he is provided with information which is some way from the truth. ECREU’s Roger Boaden was quickly on the case and fired off an immediate rebuttal to His Excellency.

‘That statement, put quite simply, is untrue,’ he wrote. ‘It may be the DExEU/F&CO line being fed to you through official channels, but it is a long way short of the truth.’

His letter went on to point out that part of the problem is an attitude which says, ‘all is done and dusted’ because healthcare and pensions for UKinEU, and concessions for EUinUK were agreed in Phase I of the negotiations.

‘But 80% of UKinEU, and 97% of EUinUK, are of working age or 15 and under, and there are issues for them which will affect their lives well into the future, unless those issues are given priority in Phase II. Theresa May’s promises made in her Lancaster House speech, and again in Florence, are a long way from being fulfilled. If anything, rights which were ‘given’ to both sets of Citizens by the EU through Treaty changes when the UK was a full participant, are being eroded, rather than ‘guaranteed’ as Theresa May stated in Florence.

‘At 11:00 p.m. on 29 March next year, I will become a TCN, a third country national in France. Because of the intransigent insistence of the UK Government that all EU Citizens working and living in the UK MUST make a new application to be allowed to reside in the UK, via ‘Settled Status’, there is a strong possibility that France may decide to treat me in exactly the same way.’

Wherever we are in the EU, we can’t just sit back and hope all this will sort itself out. It needs action now.....

So the legal experts at our Coalition of groups, British in Europe, have drafted a comprehensive Analysis of the Draft Withdrawal Agreement highlighting all that is missing. It has already been sent to the EU commission and Parliament, and you can download a copy by [clicking here](#).

A briefing document has also been sent to UK MPs, and we now need to make certain they actually read it and take action.



Don’t let them press the ‘pause button’ !

We are asking you to help lobby MPs encouraging them to read the briefing and act on it. Please use the following links which will download some notes explaining what you can do and how to do it, together with a draft letter template....

as a pdf: www.ecreu.com/pdfs/briefing-notes-and-template.pdf

as a Word document: www.ecreu.com/pdfs/briefing-notes-and-template.docx

We are all in this together, and now is probably the last opportunity we will have to make a difference before our Government focuses everything on trade, possibly to the exclusion of its own citizen’s rights.

By the way (and before you correct us!), the quote “Lies, damned lies, and statistics” was attributed to Disraeli by author Mark Twain, but it seems no one has found an actual source in Disraeli’s name.

Overseas Electors Bill 2017-19

At long - very long - last, Harry Shindler's quest approaches its goal.....

Harry, at 96, has for so long been fighting for British Citizens abroad to be recognised by the Westminster Government and have their Right to a Vote restored.



Some years ago, he brought a plea before the European Human Rights Court (nothing to do with the EU Court of Justice) which was refused.

We should also remember that James Preston, a businessman living in Madrid in 2012, took a similar case to the Supreme Court in London which was also refused.

On Friday 23rd February, The Overseas Electors Bill passed the second reading in the House of Commons. you can read the text from Hansard from [this link](#).



Some members almost filibustered the motion out, one of whom was Sandy Martin MP (Labour) for Ipswich. He spoke at length about the Frozen Pension situation, where Citizens who have retired to Australia and South Africa and elsewhere (but not the USA or Jamaica) have their State pension frozen.

That is a wrong which should most certainly be righted, but Mr Martin's speech wandered considerably from the point of the debate which concerns the vote, and the vote alone. However he spoke at length as to why Britons abroad should NOT have the vote. He was vehemently opposed to the idea.

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) spoke well for the Bill. She observed that all British Citizens abroad are ambassadors (for good or bad) for Britain, while Mike Gapes (Labour) spoke volubly in support of it. He is the representative of Labour International in Parliament and represents all those Labour voters abroad who are proudly British.

Sir Roger Gale (Conservative) spoke with passion about Harry Shindler in support of the Bill.

The end of the debate was remarkable. The Shadow deputy Leader of the Labour Party (Cat Smith), spoke from the Labour front bench. Though she made a veiled support for the principles of the Bill, she then embarked on what a fellow Labour member (Paul Flynn) called a 'filibuster' which would have talked the Bill out of time. Cat Smith was speaking as for the Labour Party. But she must have known that by going on so long, the Bill was likely to fail. If it had failed it would have been the Labour Party which kicked it out of touch.

Geoffrey Clifton Brown (Cons) intervened. He requested a motion of closure - but no division took place because the 'nays' did not put forward any tellers (those who tally the votes).

The 'Ayes' had it, as they say, hands down, or more truthfully 'hands up', with shouts of Aye ringing to the rafters.

We now await the debate in the forthcoming 'Committee Stage' in a month or two. Please be prepared to support it, and to lobby MPs.

Harry Shindler, of course, was delighted! He tells me that if the Bill eventually fails because of the tactics of the Labour Party of which he is its oldest member, he will resign his life time membership. Various members praised Harry for his steadfast campaigning on this matter.



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We now await a meeting of what is called the 'Public Bill Committee' which decide the dates for the Committee stage of this important Bill.

LATEST: *The Government has responded to a Petition on the subject of votes for life by stating: 'The Government spoke in favour of the bill during the debate. If it becomes law, this bill would implement the Government's manifesto commitment to deliver 'votes for life'. We encourage all eligible British citizens to register to vote, wherever they live.'*

What is the truth and how do we know?

It is very tiring watching the twists and turns of Brexit while we live in Spain. Newspapers and Twitter carry headlines about the post Brexit effects on air flights, driving licences, movement of pets...you name it, someone pronounces on something that affects our lives in Spain. So what is the truth? How do we know?



The Consulate in Alicante undertook a mammoth roadshow programme and visited Jávea Moraira-Teulada, Alfaz del Pi, Torrevieja, Rojales, Mazarron. Pilar de la Horadada, San Fulgencio and Benidorm. They were well attended.

Of course they could only give the Government's view on matters to do with Brexit. Their message was that most of the issues of concern to Brits in Spain had been settled and they listed pensioners' health care (via the S1 Form) and a pension which continues to be uplifted (not frozen as in most countries outside the EU).

The Consul indicated that Freedom of Movement was still being discussed and issues such as aggregated pensions and recognition of qualification was essentially sorted. She urged us all to look at the Embassy web site and Facebook to get the correct info.

I urge you to look at the ECREU and British in Europe web sites and Facebook to see the reality. Meanwhile there is some interesting news for us in Spain.....

'Democratic Deficit'- British Citizens voting in Spain (note that local elections in Spain take place in May). It is welcome news that the ruling Party in Spain the PP (Partido Popular or Populares) has recognised that there is an urgent need to give us our vote back after we leave the EU on Brexit Day 29 March. At a PP meeting in Mallaga, MEP Esteban Gonzalez Pons has taken up the issue. If we are not allowed to vote in Town Hall elections across Spain we will lose excellent British councillors of all political colours. It is MOST appropriate to contact your Town Hall and politicians of all Parties and ask them to make representations to allow us to vote.

More and more Councils and Regional Governments are pledging to their British populations that we will still be welcome after Brexit. But be aware that you MUST register for the 'residencia' and regularise your health care. (See notes below). If you are living in Spain full time it is a legal requirement to register on the 'padron' at your local town hall.

You may think that this is curious but figures from the Marina Alta part of the Costa Blanca indicate that up to 35% of British people who went to the doctor or hospital were not registered to receive health care in Spain!

Spain is a bureaucratic society. Register and it is most likely you will be safe after Brexit!



Margaret (left) judging the 'Photodona' competition for International Women's day as part of the celebrations in her village of Benitachell

Gibraltar has popped up again. It was apparently never discussed in Phase 1 of the negotiations and now that M. Barnier has started the mop-up operation from those things left out, Gibraltar is getting important again.

Spain has asked for dual control of the airport. Unless there is an agreement, Gibraltar will follow Britain and become a 'third country' and so will lose the VAT advantages as well as create more problems at the border. The good news is that it is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office responsible for the discussions - not Boris!

Meanwhile the elderly population of Spain grows older and those of us Brits who came here over the last 30 years are also getting older - some are over 90. The Alicante Consulate, in cooperation with local Town Halls, social workers, charities and hospitals started a double initiative:

more.....

1. To make British people permanently resident in Spain aware that they must be properly registered with the authorities and for adequate health care.

This means either the pensioner S1 Form, paying into Spanish national insurance (the 'convenio especial') or private medical cover. The European Health Card (EHICs) is for tourists. Those who come for long periods of time, but for less than 183 days, should have good health cover for Spain.

The Spanish authorities are no longer willing to pay for people who are not covered and some have ended up with big hospital bills. Spanish funerals happen very quickly (within 2 days) and cost over 3,500€ and the crematoria are requesting payment before the ceremony begins. Funeral plans are a safe way to avoid considerable distress.

2. To clarify and publicise the information available from Spanish Social Services and British charities.

Town Halls are the first port of call for social services and are not linked with the health system. Help is available for carers, meals etc but they must be asked for and are in the hands of the Town Hall and Social services in the area. No allowance is made for winter heating which is especially difficult now the Winter Fuel Payment has been taken away.

Note that the Spanish pension is good compared with the British one; the average Spanish pension is over 1000€ per month and the full (maximum) British pension (at current exchange rate) is just over 600€.

Meanwhile in Valencia, Ximo Puig, the President of the Region, held a UK-Spain Bilateral Health Seminar with the Ambassador Simon Manly. The President reiterated his guarantee for British citizens in the Region especially including health care.

Latest figures for the number of British pensioners officially registered with the UK as residents in Spain is 121,000. Unofficially some think it is 800,000. Spain quotes the British elderly (65+) in Spain as now at 40%, up from 32% in 2011. That however means that 60% of the population is under 65 years and so will be badly affected by the freedom of movement and qualifications issues of Brexit.

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We are very fortunate to have some top legal minds among our British in Europe coalition team.



They quickly analyse the true implications of agreements, statements and notices emanating from Government and official Brexit sources, and use those analyses to prepare meaningful submissions on our behalf - submissions which are making a real difference to the negotiator's thinking.

This effort takes time which the BiE team gives freely. But it also demands that they appear in front of Parliament committees and attend meetings with key officials which means travelling from their European homes to London, Brussels and across the EU. All this costs money which comes from their pockets.

There has to be limit to this generosity, so BiE has added a donations page to its web site. Please support this essential work. Any contribution - however modest - will be gratefully received.

Just go to this link: <https://britishineurope.org/donate-today/>



The Expendables...

Are you an EU citizen in business in the UK or in Ireland, and is Brexit making you feel expendable?

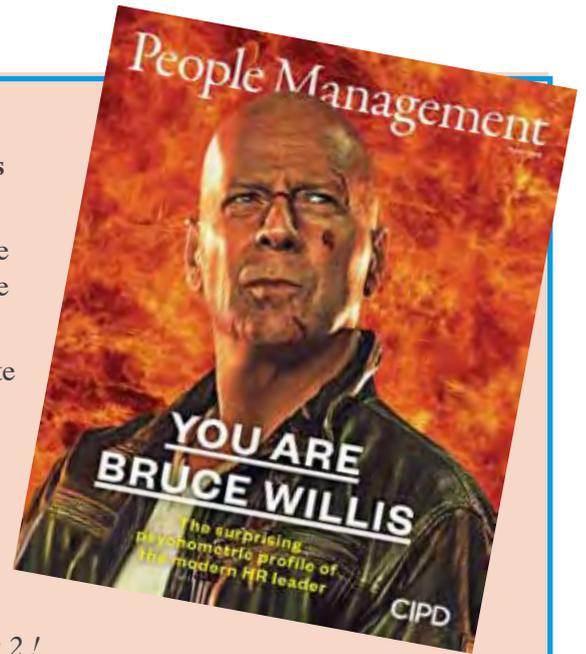
Business magazine People Management is preparing a feature on the impact of Brexit on businesses and employers. It is keen to know the views of EU citizen managers of businesses in the UK and Ireland.

The magazine is inviting employers and business owners to complete a short and anonymous survey which you will find from this link:

<http://bit.ly/2FD9aMy>

People Management is one of the largest business magazines in the UK and is aimed at HR professionals. It covers case studies, advice and analysis for businesses across the country.

The magazine is also considering a second a feature about UK people running businesses in EU, so watch out for The Expendables 2 !



Green Card - a workable alternative to a European Passport'?

The Green Card is a form of identity card which would guarantee recognition of entitlement to rights enjoyed by citizens of the EU prior to Brexit. It is the idea of New Europeans, a membership association promoting European citizenship including the rights to freedom of movement, non-discrimination and the principle of solidarity in Europe.

According to New Europeans, the European Parliament is 'moving closer and closer to the idea of a Green Card for Europe that can guarantee all the rights that EU27 citizens in the UK and Britons in the EU currently enjoy.'

There have been various calls for some form on-going EU recognition of citizens post Brexit including issuing an EU passport, but the Green Card appears to be the only option on the table at moment. As the UK still insists on EU citizens applying for 'Settled Status', at a press conference earlier this month, Guy Verhofstadt emphasised that he wants a simple scheme based on the declaratory principle.

He said he recognised that Britons in the EU and EU27 citizens in UK are all children of Europe and therefore have the right to the EU's protection. If adopted, the Green Card would be issued to Britons in EU and EU27 citizens alike and so will meet the challenge of protecting both groups of citizens with the same scheme. <https://neweuropeans.net/>





Marathon Run for France Charity

Kathryn Harrison is running the London Marathon on Sunday 22nd April to raise sponsorship for the British Charity Fund, based in Paris.

Kathryn moved to Paris from the UK in 2011 for work and decided to take up triathlon as a challenge to overcome her fear of swimming and as a way to meet people and integrate into the Paris sports community.

She is now Vice President of the Expatriés International Triathlon Club of Paris, enjoying motivating and inspiring members to achieve their goals. She is a keen promoter of female participation in sport developing projects and sporting events that benefit the wider community.

The British Charitable Fund was created in 1823 by the then British Ambassador, Viscount Granville, in response to the dreadful poverty suffered by British migrant workers and their families in Paris.

Almost two centuries later, the fund is still helping British citizens who have come to live in France and find themselves in desperate need of financial support. Those it helps are of all ages and come from all walks of life, and the charity welcomes applications from across France.

You can sponsor Kathryn's run and help British families and elderly residents coping with financial hardship in France by going to this link: <http://www.justgiving.com/kathryn-harrison7>



The British Charitable The fund does not receive any financial support from national or local governments.



If you live in France, then British Embassy Outreach is coming to you.....

Hosted by either the Ambassador, Lord Llewellyn, or Ministre Plénipotentiaire, Matthew Lodge (no2 in the Embassy), this is your opportunity to meet Government representatives first hand.

26 March: Facebook Live Q & A

19 April: Dinan

15 May: Limoges

18 June: Aude (Narbonne/Carcassone)

26 June: Nimes

11 July: Herault (Montpellier)

Full Details will be on the Embassy Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ukinfrance>) or in the Embassy newsletter. Meanwhile, if you want to discuss your future in France with your Government's representative here, put these dates in your diary!



***Any worries about Brexit that you want to get off your chest?
Let us know and we'll give you a platform - send your thoughts to: contact@ecreu.com***

We've lived in Switzerland for 20 years. When we first came, we were not able to buy a house here and so invested in one in nearby France.

Now it looks as if we may not be able to live there, unless my partner's attempts to secure an Irish passport bear fruit, both of us being British... I'm quite sure that governments are not alert to the grief caused by major changes in political tapestry.

We're already seeing the local French Commune behaving "oddly" in the absence of better intelligence & discriminating against foreign residents of long-standing!

This can only get worse. We've friends who are physically ill, now after the continuing miasma following the referendum result & the capacity of some key politicians to pursue career goals or promote cynical party self-interest agendas. Those are disgraceful and have already caused untold harm to relations between former close-allies!

Thank you for your considerable support in what is proving to be an unholy mess.....

.....ECREU Member

Need to contact someone at ECREU?

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

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United Kingdom - georgetownsend28@gmail.com

Spain - spain@ecreu.com

ex-Forces - briankemp@ecreu.com

At the time of writing this newsletter, ECREU has 10,039 members living 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

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



ECREU is an active participating member of British in Europe, the coalition of citizen's groups in the EU



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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