



The British Community Committee of France

Paris, 8 February 2018

Dear members of the British Community Committee of France (BCC),

This letter provides news from the BCC and an update on the most recent Brexit developments, and I would greatly appreciate it if you would kindly forward this and the attached files to your own members, to keep them fully informed. Many thanks!

At the Quarterly Meeting of the BCC held on 24 January, we welcomed as our newest member Association Culturelle Franco-Anglaise Aquitaine (ACFAA) based at 24500 Eymet, which has as its aim the promotion of Franco-English harmony in the cultural domain in the south west of France. Also, a proposal to make changes to certain of the BCC's Rules was deferred to the AGM, which it is hoped will take place at the British Ambassador's Residence in Paris in the week beginning 16 April (to be confirmed).

Brexit

Hardly a day goes by without a new twist to the Brexit tale. To take just one example, on just one day, Wednesday 7 February, MPs were at last shown the famous Brexit impact assessments, the judge in the court case before the Amsterdam court decided to refer important questions concerning EU citizenship to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), and the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Brexit began its attempts to determine, at long last, what kind of Brexit the government is actually trying to achieve.

Impact assessments

The BBC reported: "MPs have been allowed to see the impact assessments for their own regions. All regions will see their economies shrink, with the North East of England, the West Midlands, and Northern Ireland being the worst affected, according to the analysis.

The North-East would be hit hardest - with staying in the single market and customs union shaving 3% off GDP, an 11% reduction under a free trade deal, and 16% under a no-deal WTO scenario. London would fare the best, with reductions of 1%, 2% and 3.5% in each of the three scenarios. Scotland's estimated hit would be 2.5%, 6% or 9%. Wales would see reductions of 1.5%, 5.5% or 9.5%."

Amsterdam court case

In 2017, five British nationals in the Netherlands brought a landmark legal case which had argued that their existing EU citizenship rights could not be removed following the UK referendum to leave the EU. The Dutch judge ruled on 7 February that two important questions should be referred to the Court of Justice of the EU.

The Guardian takes up the story: "The first question asks the CJEU judges to determine whether Brexit means that British nationals will automatically lose their EU citizenship and all the rights that flow from that, including freedom of movement.

If the answer to that question is no, then the CJEU judges are asked to determine what, if any, conditions or limitations should apply to the maintenance of those rights, once Britain leaves the EU."



The British Community Committee of France

This case is all about seeking clarification, not only for the 46,000 UK citizens living in the Netherlands, but also for all the 1.2 million UK citizens living in other EU countries.

Jane Golding, Chair of British in Europe, based in Berlin, commented: "The applicants raise fundamental questions about the nature of their EU citizenship and the circumstances in which such essential rights can be taken away. The CJEU has played a key role in clarifying the scope of EU citizenship, and it is appropriate that the CJEU should be asked to identify when those rights end. We now need a quick hearing and decision in Luxembourg. It is also clear that the EU and UK cannot finalise and sign off the final text on citizens' rights in the withdrawal agreement until the CJEU has given its ruling, and we would ask both sides to respect the role of the CJEU in this process."

What kind of Brexit does the government want?

Until we get a definitive statement from the Prime Minister, we just don't know. So the speculation continues. Meanwhile, the European Commission published its draft transition agreement proposals (available at <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/transition.pdf>). And former Conservative minister Stephen Hammond MP announced that he would table an amendment to the Trade Bill which would enable the UK to remain within the European Economic Area (EEA, the single market) by rejoining the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) on Brexit. The EEA option would simultaneously solve all our citizenship worries, the Irish border problem and keep trade flowing frictionlessly.

Letters

British in Europe wrote in January to the Department for Exiting the EU (DExEU) and to the presidents of the EU institutions to raise all the issues left outstanding after the December announcement that 'sufficient progress' had been achieved (it hadn't).

The BCC wrote in January to the Minister of the Interior to ask how France intends to deal in practice with its resident UK citizens when they become third-country nationals (TCNs), on Brexit Day. Currently, French law says TCNs must obtain a long-stay visa from a French consulate outside France before they enter the country. Not a workable solution for 200,000 UK citizens already living in France, so they will need to change the law in advance of Brexit Day to make workable arrangements for us. We await the Minister's reply with interest!

The BCC and British in Europe at the Assemblée Nationale

On 15 February at 14.30, Christopher Chantrey OBE, Chairman of the BCC, returns to the Assemblée Nationale in Paris with Jane Golding and Fiona Godfrey, respectively Chair and Vice-Chair of British in Europe, for a new *mission d'information* on Brexit and its consequences on the rights and advantages of EU and UK citizens. The meeting will be chaired by the President of the Assemblée Nationale, François de Rugy. More information on this (in French) and perhaps, on the day, a video link, at [http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/15/missions-d-information/missions-d-information-de-la-conference-des-presidents/suivi-des-negociations-liees-au-brexit/\(block\)/45796](http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/15/missions-d-information/missions-d-information-de-la-conference-des-presidents/suivi-des-negociations-liees-au-brexit/(block)/45796). Anne-Laure Donskoy, co-



The British Community Committee of France

founder and co-president of the UK-based association the3million (representing the interests of the 3 million EU nationals living in the UK), will also take part.

For more on what British in Europe is doing on behalf of UK citizens living in France and elsewhere in Europe, please read the attached British in Europe February newsletter, and you can also follow developments - and, if you would like to, make a donation - at britishineurope.org.

Votes For Life - Glyn Davies MP's Overseas Electors Bill

After years of fruitless campaigning, culminating in the inclusion of a Votes For Life Bill in the 2015 and 2017 Conservative party manifestos and in the Queen's Speech in 2016, UK citizens living abroad are now pinning their hopes on a Private Member's Bill introduced by Glyn Davies MP (Conservative, Montgomeryshire) on 19 July 2017.

This Bill, the Overseas Electors Bill, will receive its second reading on Friday 23 February. It has cross-party support. But to get anywhere, it needs support in the House on that day. So we urge you to write to MPs to persuade them to attend and to vote for the Bill.

Brian Cave of BCC member organisation ECREU writes: "You can find MP's contact details from this link: <https://www.parliament.uk/mpslords-and-offices/mps/>. But even if you don't know an MP, then writing to: The MP for [*your constituency*], House of Commons London, SW1A 0AA, England', will get there. An email is useful and will help, but they don't all get through. An old fashioned postal letter is far more likely to be effective.

Before you say; '*Here we go again, another appeal to write to MPs*', the truth is we can't afford to sit back and hope someone else will do it. If all ECREU members sent emails and letters, almost 10,000 will arrive, then they will take notice. Glyn Davies has a winning personality – but he needs your support. His debate is most important. If the House of Commons shows that it is important by attending in considerable numbers, then it is most likely that the Government push the Bill to victory. Then we will ALL HAVE the Vote! If not, it will find an excuse to put it on the back burner again."

So, to your keyboards, pens and papers! And many thanks for contributing.

With all best wishes,

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