

TIME FOR THE UK TO MAKE CLEAR ITS POSITION ON CITIZENS' RIGHTS.
THE FUTURE OF 1.2 MILLION UK CITIZENS IS AT STAKE

We, British in Europe, wish David Davis well in the Brexit negotiations with the European Union which start today. We would like to remind him that he and the UK government are also there to represent the 1.2 million UK citizens most directly impacted by Brexit – those who live in the EU and have been in limbo for a year, waiting for talks to start. We expect him to stick to Theresa May's repeated pledge to make the sorting out of our post-Brexit rights - on the basis of reciprocity - her highest priority.

While the government has been busy in parliament with the Brexit bill and holding elections, British in Europe, the largest coalition of UK citizens in Europe, has been talking directly to the EU negotiators – who have consulted us on their negotiating directives, which they have changed to take on board many of our concerns.

Jane Golding, the Berlin-based Chair of British in Europe, said: "The result is that the EU offer now gives us almost everything we need and abides by a core principle which both sides should respect – that the rights of citizens in place before Brexit (including the 3 million EU citizens in the UK) should remain unchanged. We applaud that, as well as the EU's transparency in this matter. For the past year Theresa May has repeatedly refused to make a unilateral offer to the 3 million EU citizens in the UK in order, she has said, to protect the rights of the 1.2 million UK citizens in Europe - but we have no detailed information on what that might mean. The EU offer gives plenty of detail and goes almost all the way to guaranteeing all our rights, but everything depends on how the UK decides to respond. We expect the UK, which has said it will be guided by the principle of reciprocity, to respond with similar magnanimity."

Fiona Godfrey, Luxembourg-based spokesperson for British in Europe, added: "We and the 3 million EU citizens in the UK must not be used as bargaining chips or for political point-scoring. With that in mind, British in Europe also urges Mr Davis to persuade EU negotiator Michel Barnier that an early agreement on our rights and those of the 3 million EU citizens in the UK should be ring-fenced against the possible future failure of the other aspects of the withdrawal agreement. The lack of ring-fencing simply prolongs the uncertainty for up to 5 million UK and EU citizens."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

British in Europe is a coalition of a dozen volunteer UK citizens groups across the European Union. For more on ring-fencing, see <https://eutopialaw.com/2017/06/16/brexit-a-separate-citizens-rights-agreement-under-article-50-teu/>

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