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Why British in Europe has to come off the fence

After nearly two years fighting for the rights of UK citizens in the EU after Brexit and working closely with EU citizens in the UK (the 3 million), the coalition British in Europe has to accept that the rights of UK citizens in the EU will only be protected fully if the UK remains in the EU.

British in Europe was set up to protect all UK citizens who had exercised their rights as EU citizens to live and work in another EU country. Nearly 80% of us are working age or younger and Brexit threatens our livelihoods and the lives we have built up with our families through hard work in other countries. The majority of us had no vote in the referendum.

We are all Europeans, children of the European project. We are British Citizens who have exercised our EU citizenship rights, with the full support of successive British Governments across many years. We have seized all the opportunities that EU citizenship and the fundamental freedoms have given us.

Until now, we have not campaigned to stop Brexit but to defend citizens' rights. We were promised by both sides that our lives would remain the same as before. But our requests for meetings with Theresa May, the Brexit Secretary and the Home Secretary have gone unanswered.

If Brexit goes ahead, rights will be removed from us whatever the outcome of the negotiations:

1. At worst, in a no deal scenario, we lose all our rights, and our legal status, and must hope that an emergency deal can be put in place to apply third-country national status to us, which is in no way equivalent to being an EU citizen.
2. At best, the deal on citizens' rights in the draft Withdrawal Agreement would confirm many of our rights but **only in the countries where we live now**. Even then, we would lose key rights such as free movement, the right to move, work and live in any EU country other than where we live now, and face huge uncertainty about the rights of the youngest members of our group – children and young people – in particular their residency and citizenship rights. Plus the UK has failed to guarantee our right to return to the UK and bring our family members without being subject to strict UK immigration laws.

So we have no choice now but to accept that the best solution to protect our rights is to remain in the EU. That is why we now support a People's Vote, and we demand that the government deliver on its 2015 and 2017 manifesto commitments to give us back our vote so that we can finally have a say about our own lives.