

100 Years of Votes for Women - Votes for Citizens Abroad in 2018?

The Overseas Electors Bill 2017-19 gets its second reading this month. Here, our Brian Cave who has been campaigning for UK citizens living abroad to have the vote since long before Brexit reared its head, gives his views and explains why your support could be vital to persuading our Government to finally deliver on its promise...

Many Britons who live abroad feel abandoned by their Government. Those living in the Far East or Africa have long suffered a diminution of their income because the Government refuses to increase their State pension. Now, the Referendum has brought this feeling of abandonment to Europe.

If you have resided outside the United Kingdom for more than 15 years, you won't have the Vote - *(You do still have an MP even if he or she shows no interest. Regardless of time abroad, the law says the current MP where you last lived still represents you – even though you can't vote for him or her!)*

Saying; 'Why should I vote? I don't live in Britain' benefits no-one. I have been writing and blogging for years on this and suddenly Brexit arrives. Perhaps you approve of Brexit, perhaps not. Perhaps you approve of the State pension being frozen for ordinary retirees in Australia. What all this does prove is that what happens in Westminster most certainly affects you as a British Citizen no matter where you choose to live.

Most Governments in Europe and leading nations around the world recognise their citizens living abroad and allow them to participate in their country's democratic process. Britain ignores its overseas citizens which includes many who are well equipped to be 'unofficial ambassadors' for our once great nation. You should have a voice – and a Vote for Life.

On February 23rd, some progress might be started to move into history this abandonment of the British Citizen by the British Government. Glyn Davies, a Welsh Farmer in Montgomeryshire (pictured right), is presenting a Private Member's Bill, The Overseas Electors Bill 2017-19 for its second reading. It could open the door to votes for overseas citizens.



Our own Harry Shindler M.B.E. is also a significant player in this action. I have a great respect for Harry. He is 96 years old, indefatigable and puts many of us to shame. I and many of us have done so little for our fellow citizens, but Harry has fought for us in war and led the campaign for the Vote and the recognition of British Citizens by our National Government.

A few days ago, he received a 'phone call from Westminster to his home in Italy, asking if he could come to meet some MPs in Westminster. At his own expense, he flew to London and met with various Labour MPs (he is a life time supporter) but the invitation was from the Conservative side, many of whom also greatly respect Harry. One of those he met was Glyn Davies.

'Private Members' Bills always take place on a Friday. MPs generally skip them because they want to get home to their constituencies, and usually such debates have little importance. This is where we can do something positive by encouraging as many MPs as possible to attend.

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.

more.....



So it all depends on you.....

Write to an MP beseeching them to attend the Second reading of The Overseas Electors Bill 2017-19 on February 23rd.

You can find MP's contact details from this link: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-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.

You can write like this.....

I was a resident in your constituency but I have lived in [COUNTRY] for more than 15 years and can no longer vote. On Friday February 23rd Glyn

Davies MP will move the second reading of The Overseas Electors Bill 2017-19.

If you possibly can, please, attend this debate. It might well be a milestone in British Governmental history. The course of Electoral law might well change if the Bill succeeds.

Yours sincerely,

If you have lived abroad for less than 15 years, then change the first sentence to; 'I am a former resident of your constituency but I now live in [COUNTRY]. Once I have lived here for more than 15 years, I will lose my right to vote.'

It is Labour MPs who need to be encouraged, but please write to any regardless of party, or even better, leave out the constituency reference in the letter and write to several.

Brian Cave - briancave@ecreu.com

Service Personnel Update

There is an uncertain future for families of service personnel including those who may be retiring soon from EU postings. Commented ECREU's Forces coordinator, Brian Kemp: "Service personnel often 'retire' before the civilian retirement age, so through no fault of their own, they will fall outside the usual criteria for healthcare or benefits, and it is not clear what the status of their family dependents will be. We hope someone in Government realises their unique situation and takes action soon."



At least one serving officer has expressed concerns about the implications of Brexit – implications the Government appears to have overlooked: "The current arrangements in France allow personnel and dependents, to obtain a Carte Vitale. We are then able to claim any further medical fees, and a defined portion of dental fees back from Public Funds. Clearly that could be subject to change when we leave the EU.

"The simple solution will be for us to be treated as non-entitled by the French state and for us to claim back the full cost of medical treatment, but at some additional cost to the taxpayer.

"Another potential issue will be personnel's entitlement to place children into the French state education system, which for those with younger children and for those in more remote locations, is often the only practical choice. Again, leaving the EU could have an effect upon that entitlement.

"The other possible factor I could envisage is that of employment rights. Currently this is not an issue, however in other non-EU locations, such as the US it is."

Please contact Brian Kemp, our HM Forces Coordinator at: brian.kemp@ecreu.com

Feliz año, Happy new year!

As the results - or rather the deficiencies - of Phase 1 of the Brexit negotiations come to light, many British people in Spain are realising that they may need to take action. Even though Spain has the largest number of retired British people living on the continent, 60% of the British in Spain are not retired. Some are early retirees, not yet in receipt of a pension, while the majority are working families with children going to local schools or to college or university in Spain.



For British pensioners living here, it appears that, deal or no deal, the British government will honour its pledge to continue to pay our healthcare through the S1 scheme and to uprate our pensions on an annual basis in line with pensions in Britain. These two issues were the biggest worries of our ECREU pensioner membership. However, for the working families, the future is far from secure.

Freedom of movement of people is one of the main pillars of the European Union and, understandably, this is a benefit that there is little will to 'give away' in the negotiations. Both Mrs May and M. Barnier said that all who moved in good faith to live in Europe under the umbrella of the EU should be able to continue their lives as before. But if freedom to move to progress your career, or to travel on a regular basis as part of your job across borders is not allowed, then this makes a great difference to the lives of many many Brits in Europe.

Some see a change of nationality as the solution. A Spanish passport would certainly allow us to move freely and ensure no problems in re-entering Spain. Many who live here have little problem with that. However, there are two drawbacks. One is that with very few exceptions, Spain does not permit dual nationality and expects you to give up your original nationality. Although we know people who do have both Spanish and UK passports, the situation is not at all clear.

Secondly, as a Spanish national and therefore totally subject to the laws of Spain, we must take into account that there are considerable differences in terms of things like inheritance and taxation.

At the moment, as EU members, nothing needs to be done, but in March 2019 that situation will change. The most useful and easy change would be if Spain can be convinced to recognise dual nationality with the UK - even as a special (even unique?) case. Our coalition partners Eurocitizens, based in Madrid, have had a meeting with Spanish Minister Dastis and put this to him. His response was not encouraging. Another lawyer, close to S. Mariano Rayoy, was equally unenthusiastic when I raised the issue with him back in August. So I do not think that dual passports will be allowed in Spain in the foreseeable future.

Another concern post Brexit is the right to vote here in Spain. Our right to vote in European elections (as a British citizen) will obviously terminate. Also going is our automatic right to be on the electoral roll here in Spain and our right to stand as candidates. These will disappear on Brexit day, so we will not be able to vote in local elections and British councillors (of which there are quite a number) will automatically lose their seats. Local and European elections take place in May 2019, 8 weeks after Britain leaves. For those who have lived outside Britain for more than 15 years, this will mean they will be totally without the vote anywhere, yet being able to vote in a democracy is one of the UN human rights.

This has also been raised by Eurocitizens in Madrid and by me with members of the Spanish government. I raised it when I met the British ambassador before Christmas. I raised this with my MP when I met him in Westminster in December. The response of each was remarkably similar....so what do you want ME to do about it?!

The solution is for there to be a bilateral agreement sorted BEFORE Brexit day, and BEFORE December 2018 (before the electoral roll is closed). I have written to my MP asking who in the British government is responsible for starting these discussions and asking for my letter requesting action to be passed to him or her. I have also written to the Cabinet asking for the Votes for Life Bill to be dusted down and put before Parliament asap. Please do the same. The more letters our MPs get, the more they have to take notice. Many people tell me that 'it will all be alright on the day'. With things as they are, no it won't!

There are difficult decisions for the young to take about their nationality. There are issues about democracy and the representation of the British residents in the Town Halls. The 'agreements' made in Brussels have only been gained by the hard work of ECREU and their colleagues. Such things don't just happen. Please continue to play your part in supporting ECREU. Write to your MP (use the information in this newsletter - it's more than most MPs know!!), keep informed by going onto our Facebook or website and challenge those who say it's all a load of fuss and things will be the same. You will be surprised how many so called Brexiteers have no knowledge of the real situation and actually are just as concerned as the rest of us.



Margaret Hales - margarethales@ecreu.com

***Spain Latest!* - Brexit meetings with Consul - Costa Blanca. To download schedule of meeting dates and venues, click [HERE](#)**


Applying for Italian citizenship

If, like us, you are British expats living in Italy who want to take out Italian citizenship, then you might find the following points useful about submitting the application. This advice is for people with no Italian relatives or ancestors, who want to apply as (still) EU citizens with at least 4 years uninterrupted residence in Italy. People with Italian relatives or ancestors have a different procedure and greater likelihood of success. This does not aim to be a full guide; these can be found in the internet in various official and unofficial sites, but highlight a few pitfalls and unexpected problems and how to overcome them.



1. The basic requirements are centrally set in Rome, but the citizenship offices of the local prefettura in the region or town where you live, are responsible for processing the application, conducting the interview, any investigations necessary and recommending to Rome whether citizenship should be awarded. The final decision naturally rests with Rome. We live in South Tyrol/Alto Adige which is a very efficient place, but also a stickler for rules and very few British residents. The staff in the “ufficio cittadinanza” were very helpful and prompt in answering a few preliminary questions before we took it further. I understand that in some other places, including Rome, people have had similarly positive experiences, but this may vary a lot.
2. If you are not very used to filling in user-unfriendly on-line forms, then we strongly advise finding an organization to help you with the submission. We found an ONLUS (non-profit) organization in Bolzano, called CONSOL, which helps immigrants in Alto Adige to deal with the Italian bureaucracy, including processing the citizenship applications. I imagine there are similar organisations elsewhere in Italy. They have a lot of experience with the process and the requirements, but had never had a British applicant before and their customers are usually younger, non-EU immigrants.

For €200 they will advise on what fields need to be filled in the application, submit it on-line, monitor its progress through the system, up to completion, including accompanying the applicant to the official interview, making sure that the application does not fall into a black hole. We have been given the very strong impression that, apart from not having a criminal record anywhere, by far the most important issue is that you have sufficient income to meet the requirements and are not at risk of becoming a financial burden to the Italian state. Owning your own property in Italy is taken into account, but not, apparently, savings, although this is hard to believe in the case of people with substantial assets.

3.  As we did not contact CONSOL until we had all our documents and information almost ready, we found we had done some unnecessary work. The form asks for the exact dates and places of residence from the age of 14. This was particularly difficult for my husband, as he was in the RAF and moved very frequently. We were able to get this information from Cranwell, but were still left with some later periods in the UK, when we only knew the year we moved and not the date. It all turned out to be unnecessary, however. CONSOL assured us that it was not compulsory to fill in this part of the form regarding places of residence in the UK. We only provided exact dates going back to 1997 when we left the UK. For periods of official residence in Germany and Italy we had the information, since there are proper registration systems in these countries. It may be, however, that some prefettura do ask for more information, so it would be as well to check with them.
4. Police certificates are required in respect of all periods spent living outside Italy. For the UK, these are issued by the ACRO office: https://www.acro.police.uk/police_certificates.aspx. We had to apply for police certificates for Germany, as we had lived there too. The German process is much simpler than the UK one, but both were straightforward enough to comply with. The important thing to remember is that the certificates are valid only for 6 months, so be sure not to apply for them until you have all the other documents – birth and marriage certificates, a translator lined up, and are nearly ready to submit the application. The police certificates and the birth and marriage certificates all have to be apostilled, ie authenticated/legalised, with an FCO stamp, by another British authority, located in Milton Keynes. <https://www.gov.uk/get-document-legalised>. It is not possible to have documents sent directly from one British authority to another, so one ends up spending a lot of money on couriers to send the documents backwards and forwards between Italy and the UK. We used ‘Mail Boxes’ which has offices in most Italian cities, to get the documents couriered and had no problems. After getting the apostille, the document has to be translated.

more.....



Unless you are yourself a qualified translator, it is best to get this done by a professional who specialises in translating legal documents. They also have to be presented in a very similar format to the original certificates. We found the translator through the on-line list of qualified translators in the “Albo” for Alto Adige. The translator has to swear that the translation is accurate and provide a “verbale” stating this, signed by the local tribunal with a “bollo” attached. One way and another it all costs a lot of money! The British Embassy also has a short list of translators, but only for a few large cities.

5. After our application was accepted and a date fixed in April 2018 for our interview, we thought everything was OK. Then the world of Franz Kafka opened before us. We got registered letters from the citizenship office in Bolzano, telling us that there were inconsistencies in our “generalità” ie our identities, and they required a document from a British Embassy or Consulate confirming that we are who we are and that I changed my surname on marriage. They did not explain why. It seemed that British birth certificates and marriage certificates were not considered sufficient evidence for them that we had been given our father’s surnames at birth, and that I had changed my surname, taking my husband’s surname, on marriage (the latter, despite the evidence of my passport).

We were puzzled, but concluded, having looked again at the certificates, that the fact that the birth certificate nowhere states specifically that the child has taken the surname of the father, simply gives the child’s forenames and the parents surnames, and that the marriage certificate is signed by the woman only in her maiden name, meant that, given their ignorance of UK documentation and law, they could not accept them as sufficient proof. We know that some other prefettura, who are used to British documents, have accepted them without demur. I contacted the British Embassy in Rome by e-mail, but got most unhelpful, off-hand, replies simply saying they could not certify identities and suggesting we contact a lawyer. Eventually, through persistence, hints of taking it higher - with reference to a recent meeting in Florence of the British Ambassador with representatives of Brit expat organisations - I got an answer from the Vice Consul herself, who was very apologetic for the responses I had received from a junior member of staff, apparently standing in, and who did not normally deal with these issues.

She explained that there is a list of British Lawyers, registered with them, who can provide a certification of identity, together with a letter from the Embassy saying they are authorized to do this. She had encountered cases before where British married women had similar problems with the Italian authorities over their name change and had to provide this extra certification, but not men whose names, like those of my husband, had never changed and whose documents all show exactly the same name and surname in every case!! She also provided me with a statement in Italian from the Embassy saying that they do not themselves provide certifications of identity. I thought this was important, to keep up our sleeves, just in case the Italian office later insists that what they need is a certification directly from the Embassy/consulate itself, as they had originally asked for. We were able to get the certification done quickly and efficiently, without having to travel to Rome, by sending the scanned birth and marriage certificates and passports to Charlotte Oliver (www.oliverpartners.it/charlotte-oliver/), a British solicitor in Rome, on the Embassy’s list and a member of ECREU and British in Italy. The Italian citizenship office in Bolzano has accepted the document and said they are content to wait to see the original along with our other documents at the interview in April. We hope that this is the solution to this particular problem. I will provide a further update after the interview in April. The final decision about our citizenship will not be made until about two years after the application, ie almost certainly after Brexit. I just hope they do not then say we need to reapply as “extracomunitari” after 10 years uninterrupted residence!

If anyone else has further useful information about applying for Italian citizenship eg. tips regarding the interview, please share it with ECREU. Our understanding is that it is just an informal interview to find out why one is applying and not a test of one’s knowledge of Italian politics and history, such as some countries demand.

Denise and Michael Hope, Merano





Message from the British Ambassador to France, Ed Llewellyn



First, may I wish you a Happy New Year!

At the Embassy, the New Year has already got off to a busy start with the Franco-British Summit. Held in London last month, the Prime Minister and the President met and reaffirmed the close ties between our two countries.

They agreed new areas to work together across the board – including on security, science, economics, education and culture. You can read the full communique [here](#).

At a reception on the evening of the Summit, both the Prime Minister and the President also spoke of the importance of the close human ties between our two countries and the value that both French and British expats bring to both countries. As the Prime Minister said, “More than a century on from the ‘Entente Cordiale’ let us celebrate our own ‘Entente Chaleureuse’.”

On Brexit, we rounded off last year on a positive note, having reached agreement with EU negotiators on some complex, but critical, issues including on citizens’ rights. On 19 December, the Prime Minister wrote to UK nationals living in Europe <https://www.facebook.com/notes/road-to-brexit/prime-minister-theresa-mays-message-to-uk-nationals-living-in-europe/348405625623654/> with details of the agreement on citizens’ rights, which broadly means that you will be able to continue to enjoy all the rights that you do now after the UK’s departure from the European Union. I hope that this provides you with some reassurance

We also reached agreement on a financial settlement that honours the commitments we undertook as members of the EU and an agreement on the Northern Ireland border that preserves the territorial integrity of the UK and the stability that has been brought about by the Belfast Agreement.

These agreements mean that, this year, we are now moving into the second phase of negotiations, to talk about our future relationship. A first step will be agreeing the detail of a time-limited implementation period that will give further certainty to people and businesses as we transition out of the EU.

At an Embassy level, this year we will continue to host meetings for British citizens around France, to answer any questions and provide information – including more information on the permanent residency application process in France. We’ll be communicating our plan in the coming weeks.

We look forward to meeting some of you over the coming months and will continue to communicate through our *Voisins Voices* newsletter. I hope many of you are already subscribed but, if not, please do subscribe [here](#).



If you live within reach of Montauban (82000), then British Embassy Outreach is coming to you on 15th February.

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.

To book your place, click here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/british-embassy-outreach-tickets-38724136936>

The next event will be in Caen, late February or early March. Details will be on the Embassy Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ukinfrance>) or in the Embassy newsletter. Future events are being planned.

Spreading the word

ECREU is joining ECAS (The European Citizen Action Service), an international, Brussels-based nonprofit organisation with a pan-European membership and 26 years of experience.

In partnership with the University of Kent in Brussels, ECAS established the EU Rights Clinic, which helps EU citizens and their family members who are faced with complex problems when moving around the EU. The Clinic handles approximately 70 cases annually.

Its latest action comes in the form of a comprehensive letter to Donald Tusk calling for Further Protections of Citizens' Rights in Phase 2 of Brexit Negotiations and to address those matters related to citizens' rights that were not addressed in the interim deal that concluded the first phase of negotiations in December 2017.

The letter calls on the European Council to give priority in the second phase of Brexit negotiations to the continuation of negotiations on citizens' rights as a distinct strand that will cover the acquired rights of certain family members and primary carers of children, the continuing right of free movement of UK nationals in the EU27 after Brexit and the incorporation into the final withdrawal agreement of commitments made by the UK on "comprehensive sickness insurance" and "genuine and effective work".

The letter to President Tusk has been submitted on behalf of 60 signatories, including representatives of the 3 million British in Europe, MEPs Seb Dance, Jean Lambert and Molly Scott Cato, Plaid Cymru leader Leanne Wood, legal experts including Jolyon Maugham QC and Colin Yeo, leading academics including Professor Steve Peers and representatives of civil society organisations.

To download the letter as a pdf, [click here](#). If you would like to add your name in support of the letter, you can do so using a simple on-line form by clicking [this link](#). The more names, the greater the impact!

You can read more about ECAS from: <http://ecas.org>.

Meanwhile.....

Our colleagues at British in Europe spent a busy January preparing a comprehensive document 'Reflections on Phase 1 & Considerations for Phase 2 of the negotiations' for submission to the EU.



The document gives a full analysis of the situation so far and the shortfalls. It is now in the hands of the key players in the EU. It sets out clearly what we are all trying to achieve this year. Download a pdf copy [from here](#).



BiE Chair Jane Golding, was also invited to address the EU Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on February 1st.

You can watch a recording whole session including her impassioned case for citizens rights on EuroparlTV, and see just how seriously the EU takes our rights from [this link](#).

.....and at the same meeting

Roger Casale of Brussels based campaign group New Europeans, pressed the EU for a 'Green Card' guaranteeing the package of rights that EU citizens' currently enjoy by virtue of being a national of an EU member state.



The UK (and EEA member states) would be invited to join the Green Card scheme based on reciprocal guarantees for EU 27 citizens. If adopted, it would mean that EEA and UK citizens with permanent residency status in EU member states would be eligible to apply for the Green Card which could be extended or modified to include all Third Country Nationals in the EU.

New Europeans say the proposal would end the current uncertainty faced by EU27 citizens living in the UK and Britons resident in the EU.

Need to contact someone at ECREU?

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

Italy - italy@ecreu.com
Spain - spain@ecreu.com
United Kingdom - georgetownsends28@gmail.com
ex-Forces - briankemp@ecreu.com

At the time of writing this newsletter, ECREU has 9,955 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:***



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 © 2018 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