

SUMMARY ACCOUNT OF ISSUES RAISED BY BRITISH CITIZENS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The British Embassy held an initial series of four open forums with British citizens in the Netherlands in June 2017 to discuss the United Kingdom's forthcoming exit from the European Union. There was a strong level of interest and the forums were oversubscribed. The subject provoked strong feelings and the discussion was frank and spirited. We have summarised the discussions under the following themes.

Residence

There was much discussion around Dutch residence permits (verblijfsvergunning) and whether there would be changes in the treatment of British citizens after Brexit. There were also specific questions about the status of those working at international organisations in the Netherlands.

Dual Nationality

A number of British Citizens felt strongly that they shouldn't have to give up their British passport in order to obtain Dutch nationality. Some suggested that the Dutch government should be lobbied to add the UK to the list of countries with exemptions for dual-nationality.

Voting Rights

There was frustration that British citizens living abroad lose their right to vote in the UK after 15 years. Many felt that repeated promises to change the law had been broken.

Free Movement

Most were very concerned that they should not lose the ability to live and work across the EU27 as they enjoy now. Some noted that this was not something that applied to EU citizens in the UK and might not therefore be included in a deal based purely on reciprocity. But it was a vital interest, particularly for those working across the EU or for those living near the border with another Member State (e.g. in Maastricht.)

Immigration

Concerns were raised about the potential difficulties for families whose members might have different nationalities and/or different residence history. Specifically there were concerns about the ability to return to the UK with an EU spouse in the future.

EU/UK Negotiations

Most wanted more details about when they would know for certain what would happen to them. Many participants sought clarity about what would happen if they had not qualified for permanent residence before 30 March 2019. Some asked about the status of the EU and UK offers in the event that no Article 50 deal was reached.

Other subjects raised included:

Pensions, access to healthcare, access to higher education and the mutual recognition of qualifications.