

Summary of meeting 03rd. July, 2017

with HM Consul-General for Southern Germany:

HMC-G introductory statement:

Not in a position to provide any concrete answers this evening, intention for him is to "take concerns back to London".

From UK side, these issues could have been decided prior to Brexit, but EU partners declined to enter into any discussion.

Should be resolved by the end of the year.

Intent and goodwill on both sides to resolve quickly.

EU law based on treaties, need to create basis in UK law for EU citizens.

European Court of Justice will have no jurisdiction.

In substance parties are very close, "huge overlap" – health, pensions, recognition of professional qualifications.

Important things we do not know – cannot have discussion on future relationship until terms of leaving are settled – terms of leaving is code for money.

Britain wants open relationship, close relationship as possible.

Establishment, business require pragmatic solutions. separate but related.

Questions/Observations from the audience:

Observation: use of the word "reciprocal", the response of the UK is inferior to the offer made by the EU - the UK govt has no idea what it is doing.

HMC-G: UK wants the EU citizens to stay, British citizens in the EU should be able to continue to enjoy the rights they currently have; need to regulate the position of EU citizens in the UK after Brexit into UK law.

Question of why currently existing citizens' rights could not be transposed into UK law.

HMC-G: strong intent to resolve this issue, but "nothing is agreed until all is agreed".

Observation: EU citizens in UK being treated shabbily; no support for UK citizens in EU; What is being done to support UK citizens in EU, e.g. as regards financial support for the volunteer groups representing our interests?

HMC-G: Make sure we understand the issues, stakeholder groups, listening and understanding, not in a position to fund groups, having more discussions, no legal advice on citizenship, liaise with Bavarian authorities; German govt. says applications for citizenship will be processed.

Question: Who does he report back to?

HMC-G: report to the team in the Embassy, from there to the Dept. for Exiting the EU.

Observation: We are fighting for our rights.

HMC-G: Cannot give any comfort, our role is to understand the concerns, not going to import EU law, British electorate does not want the ECJ.

Question: Children who wish to study, student fees, ability to bring elderly parents here to Germany post-Brexit + their healthcare costs:

HMC-G: Answer not known; family re-union – EU rights are more than British citizens' rights, this will change.

Question: Pensions aggregation, tax exit charge, what about private pension:

HMC-G: wish to continue aggregation after Brexit.

Further comments re. existential threat to touring English theatre company; being made to feel like scapegoats, no European citizenship, desire for ring fencing any agreement on citizens' s rights:

HMC-G: we are "not far apart"; "huge effort is being put into this to resolve it – and we will".

There were expressions of anxiety, anger and resentment at the position of the UK government and the consequences of the decision of the UK to leave the EU. There was no apparent consideration of the position of its citizens abroad when formulating its EU response. The assertion that goodwill was present in the opening of negotiations was not shared universally by the meeting. There remains deep anger at the exclusion from the ability to vote in UK matters. HMC-G did say that the restoration of the vote remains policy of the principal party in government.

There was much emphasis on the lack of visible activity by HMG on behalf of British citizens in the EU, that it is a sad indictment of the UK government's position that its citizens feel the need to seek the citizenship of another country in order to protect their position.

There was discussion of the question of dual citizenship and the position on this after the departure of the UK – would it still be possible to retain British citizenship? There are conflicting views on this from Munich authorities. This is a point on which the UK/Embassy/Consulate could give practical assistance.

Overall an evening of disappointment. The position of the UK government to date does not permit its representatives to give any assurances on particulars or provide any detail on the aims of negotiation.