

Welcome to monthly newsletter for **British in Germany**, the group dedicated to protecting the rights of British citizens in Germany during and after any kind of Brexit. As a coalition member of British in Europe, we're proud to stand for an open, inclusive, British-European identity – and we're determined to make sure that both UK and EU citizens' voices are heard in the ongoing Brexit negotiations. It's a big task and the next five months up until October 2018 are crucial – so we need all the help we can get! If you'd like to **join up, volunteer or donate**, check out the information at the end of this newsletter.

Withdrawal agreement still only gives us rights in the country where we live

March began with a renewed call for the EU to **change course on the issue of continued free movement for 1.2 million UK citizens currently living in other EU states**. This was in response to the publication of the first draft of the [Commission's draft Withdrawal Agreement](#), confirming the common understanding reached in December between the EU and UK. The agreement confirmed that UK nationals living in EU27 countries would keep their residence and work rights, but **only in their host state** at the end of the Brexit transition period—without the right to live or to work easily in the other 26.

The EU justifies its position on continued freedom of movement (FoM) for UK citizens by arguing that it seeks to protect “existing life choices” rather than “future life choices.” In [a 21-page response](#) to the draft agreement, British in Europe's (our partner organisation's) legal minds pointed out that this is inconsistent with other Commission positions found in the very same draft text. For example, the draft does cover rights for future spouses to join those covered by the Withdrawal Agreement after the transition period ends—a position we support and have campaigned strongly for.



Brits still left in the dark over draft's ambiguities

“We are losing rights under the agreement, like free movement, that we have now, so it really is a question of mind the gaps in the agreement,” said British in Europe Chair Jane Golding. “And at the moment, we don't know how they will be filled. So, for example, we still can't say for certain how a Brit who moved to Germany two years ago and set up a cross-border business will be able to continue providing services for clients in Poland or France after Brexit—and that's just one of many examples of gaps in the agreement.”

In BiE's comments on the agreement, they requested further clarification from both the EC and UK negotiators on a number of issues, including who qualifies as a “frontier worker”, how social security provisions will apply, on what basis UK citizens will be able to provide cross-border services and how dual citizens will be covered by the Withdrawal Agreement.

You can read our summary of the key outstanding issues [here](#), and a brilliant summary from British in Europe's Twitter account [here](#).

European Parliament continues to support citizens' rights to free movement

There's lots of work still to do, but there are some encouraging results to report. The European Parliament's continued support (set out in [their 14 March resolution](#)) is particularly welcome and crucial, including their strong stance on free movement and belief that the burden of proof on the right of permanent residence should lie with the state concerned, not applicants. The European Parliament has the power to veto the Brexit Treaty if it considers that key issues—like citizen rights—aren't addressed satisfactorily. However, it can only veto the whole agreement, not parts of it.



Since the Commission published its final draft version of the Withdrawal Agreement on 19 March, British in Europe has had de-briefs with its contacts in the EC's Article 50 Task Force, the EU Council and DExEU and has discussed the draft with MEPs and UK MPs.

“There's a lot of ambiguity on citizen rights but we have to remember that the draft treaty is just that—a draft and that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed,” says British in Germany co-founder Daniel Tetlow. “We have a year to go until exit date and really no more than 5 months to influence the final version of the Withdrawal Agreement so there's a lot of work we can still do. We're getting more volunteers every day who are dealing with everything from lobbying German authorities and Brussels institutions, campaigning in the UK, and holding events in their cities. There's still time for people to join up and give what help they can.”

Telling the story: why freedom of movement matters

Despite David Davis' [recent claims](#) that UK citizens in the EU can now “look to their futures with confidence”, the free movement issue is one of the big outstanding issues still hanging over our heads.



Take the example of a self-employed translator who lives in Germany and works with clients across the EU, a lawyer who takes on cross-border cases or a musician who earns a living touring the continent and working on remote composition projects.

For thousands of self-employed and anyone who works regularly across borders - often offering digital services

remotely - free movement is a fundamental part of their livelihoods. Will freelancers be

forced to turn down work simply because a client is based in another EU member state from their host country?

British in Europe has decided to carry out a survey of the members of all the BiE coalition groups to gauge support for a last big push on free movement. We know that there is a good deal of support for this in British in Germany but we want to get feedback from all our members. Can everyone please help in distributing this link for the survey and post on social media: <https://bit.ly/2HQguWT>

Call for case studies: Why does FoM matter to you?

Making the case for continued FoM is going to be a big priority with our campaigning work over the coming months - and a few campaigns are already getting off the ground. BiG co-founder Daniel Tetlow and BiG member Abigail Tonkin are going to be working with a professional film director and editor in Berlin to produce five short films highlighting the necessity of FoM and its positive contribution to our lives. The films will focus on five individuals who have a particularly strong stake in freedom of movement for any reason.

They are looking for great characters that can tell a story of why FoM is so important to them. They already have some names and to-date are looking for a German whose life will be directly affected by the proposed FoM restrictions. Due to budget constraints, the interviewees would ideally be based in or around Berlin. The characters should also be working age, as this is the demographic we particularly want to highlight. If you'd like to suggest someone - or want to help or find out more - simply email abigail.tonkin@britishineurope.org for a chat about the project.

Also, stay tuned for more news and updates from BiE affiliate group [Young European Voices](#), who will be launching their own FoM campaign over the coming weeks.

In other news...

13 March: British in Bavaria holds info evening in Nuremberg



A Brexit info event was held in Fürth on March 13th at the invitation of local resident Miranda Bellchambers, who had attended the info evening in Ottobrunn in February. The purpose was to impart information, share experiences and discuss the implications of the UK's impending departure. The event attracted some 40 people of all ages and backgrounds from the Nuremberg, Fürth, Erlangen area, who heard an outline of the current situation faced by UK citizens in Germany given by David Hole.

Attendees highlighted the concerns engendered by the current uncertainty in relation to citizens' rights, in particular the potential loss of the right to free movement within the remaining EU, the position on pensions from the UK and continued health care

arrangements, the loss of entitlement to family reunion for younger citizens who may not be in a “durable relationship” as at the date of withdrawal.

The benefits of dual citizenship for those eligible and interested were discussed in depth and it was possible to allay the concern that, after withdrawal, those granted German citizenship beforehand as dual citizens will somehow be required to make a choice or forfeit one of them. However, for many of those present, citizenship is not yet an option. Exclusion from voting in the referendum and subsequent election was a topic of considerable anger and resentment. The current private member’s bill before the UK parliament on restoring votes for life will not have retroactive effect and offers little comfort.

14 March: Government confirms support for ‘Votes for Life’ Bill

The UK Government has reaffirmed its support for the ‘Overseas Electors’ Private Members Bill, which would give UK citizens abroad the lifelong right to vote in UK elections. In response to a recent petition demanding votes for life and dedicated MPs for UK citizens overseas, an official statement read: “The Government remains committed to scrapping the 15-year limit on the voting rights of overseas electors ahead of the next scheduled General Election in 2022, subject to securing the necessary Parliamentary approval.”



This February, the [Overseas Electors Bill](#) passed its second reading in the House of Commons, although two Labour MPs spoke passionately against it. It has now been referred to a Public Bill Committee, which will scrutinise the detail of the Bill and suggest potential amendments.

1 April: British in Germany welcomes Emma Corris as the new intern



At the start of this month, Emma Corris started working with British in Germany from the UK. She will be joining the Berlin team on 27th April until the end of August. Emma will take over from the fantastic Elvira Bolhuis – our previous intern - in supporting all our campaigning, communications and lobbying activities over this coming critical six-month period.

Emma is a third-year student at Oxford University studying French and German. As part of her year abroad, she will be working with us full-time until the end of August, taking over most of Elvira’s responsibilities such as being the first point of contact for British in Germany.

Brexit feels very close to Emma’s day to day experience, recently in the NHS and with her fellow students and teachers at Oxford. She is currently working from the UK and will be coming to Berlin at the end of April. We look forward to welcoming Emma to BiG!

2 April: UK Citizens in Austria becomes latest group to affiliate with BiE

British in Europe continues to expand its reach across Europe, with [UK Citizens in Austria](#), a post-Brexit citizens' rights campaign group, becoming the latest member to join the coalition.

5 April: British in Germany meets with *Bundesministerium des Innern* (Home Office)

The BiG team recently met with the *Bundesministerium des Innern* (BMI), the German Home Office, and discussed citizenship applications, dual citizenship, and how Brits in Germany will secure their rights under the Withdrawal Agreement. British in Germany are pushing on timeframes for citizenship applications, which vary across Germany, and for Germany to stick with the current registration system to apply for obtaining permanent residency after the transition ends. The meeting with the Bmi follows on from a series of high-level meetings with the *Auswärtiges Amt*, German Foreign Office, in Berlin that have taken place over the course of UK-EU negotiations on citizens' rights since June last year.



17 April: Representatives from British Embassy in Paris hold Strasbourg info event

Representatives from the British Embassy in Paris came to Strasbourg this month to provide an update on citizens' rights at the current phase of Brexit negotiations. The event was well attended, with around 100 people travelling to the event both from France and across the border in Baden-Württemberg. The *Ministre Plénipotentiaire*, Matthew Lodge, gave UK citizens in attendance the government view on citizen's rights – but faced some tough questioning from the audience on the inconsistencies in the government's Brexit plans and suggestions about the (in)validity of the referendum. The event followed on from a tense



meeting on the 11 April at the British Embassy in Paris, where concerned citizens subjected British Ambassador Edward Llewellyn to a series of tough questions about their rights. The meeting was picked up by Brexit correspondent Lisa O'Connell, who [wrote about it](#) in The Guardian.

Planning is now underway for further meetings to be held as part of British Embassy in Paris' Outreach Programme. The events in France are also open to Brits across the border in Germany, but there may also be an appetite for BiG groups in the Baden Baden or Kehl areas. There is already a group in Stuttgart, led by Lois Goddard. For more information or if you can help support a BiG group, please contact Lois Goddard lois.goddard@britishingermany.org for the Stuttgart group or Philip Sloan, who attended the Strasbourg meeting, at p.sloan@iubh.de.

23 April: British in Germany launches new-look website

On Monday 23rd, British in Germany launched its [revamped website](#). Many thanks to Gwen Jones and Andrew Cox who have given many hours of their time to the re-design and update of the new site.

Upcoming Events

25 April: BiG Stuttgart is holding a follow up meeting to their first successful start-up meeting in March. For further information contact Lois Goddard:
lois.goddard@britishingermany.org

26 April: BiG Berlin meeting. Contact info@britishingermany.org for more information or to RSVP

Mid-May: Start-up BiG meeting in Leipzig. Details TBC.

Date TBC: British in Germany and the Frankfurt Oberbürgermeister are continuing planning work on an information evening for British citizens in the Frankfurt / Rhein Main area, focussing on post-Brexit rights and Dual Nationality.

The British Ambassador has confirmed attendance, and the event has also support from the Honorary Consul, Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft, and British Chamber of Commerce.

Interested? Then email info@britishingermany.org with your details.

Further details and events listings can be found [here](#).

Call for fundraisers and volunteers

The British in Germany team are looking seriously at what funds we can raise quickly in order to support our campaigning work and be able to offer a stipend to our hard-working interns. If you know of anyone with strong fundraising skills and experience, or funds that you think it would be worth BiG applying for that could be released within the next 6 months, we'd love to hear from them.



For general campaigning and lobbying, we have a whole variety of needs. If you can spare a few hours each week, please get in touch. Speak to the leaders of your local BiG group and take a look at our Working Groups Tasks and Targets internal document to get an idea of what our priorities are.

Contact: info@britishingermany.org for a chat about how you could get involved.

Ways to Donate

To pledge support to the work of British in Germany go on the BiG website and click on Join or Donate or [click here](#). Please note that whether for membership or donation, it's cost free to do a transfer rather than going via Paypal.

You can also [donate](#) to support the work of our coalition group British in Europe. As the coalition bringing together UK citizens' groups across the EU, BiE has been driving the core of our advocacy work in both the EU and the UK over the past year. Now, as negotiations for 2018 get underway, the group has an incredibly important role to play in spearheading and shaping the discussion on citizens' rights – and a one-off or regular monthly donation could make all the difference.

Got news to share?

Are you putting on an event for UK citizens in your city? Have you had meetings with your local politicians about Brexit and citizens' rights? If you have any news to share for the British in Germany newsletter or you'd like your upcoming event to be included in our

calendar, please contact info@britishingermany.org with the subject line: BiG Newsletter.