

### PRESS STATEMENT: EU Co decision

15 December 2017

The EU and UK must ensure citizens' rights remain a key priority and guarantee all the remaining rights of 1.2mn UK citizens living in the EU during Phase Two of the Brexit negotiations, according to leading citizens' rights campaign group, British in Europe.

British in Europe also notes that European Council has agreed to negotiate transition period of around two years. If negotiated, this would mean that the implementation of the final Withdrawal Agreement, including the deal on citizens' rights, would be delayed until 2021.

#### Progress to date

Responding to EU Council's decision that there has been 'sufficient progress' on the agreement on the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU Jane Golding, Chair of British in Europe said:

*'We agree that the current state of talks offers some reassurance for many, particularly for pensioners who know that, provided a final agreement is reached, their health care and right to pension increases will not be affected. There is also some comfort that, subject to an overall agreement, we can continue to live where we are. However, big question marks linger over what will happen to citizens' rights during the next phase of the talks and outstanding issues – such as free movement - are substantial and worrying.'*

#### Major concerns for UK citizens in the EU 27:

- **Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed:** a factor made stronger by the UK's position at the end of the joint report which suggests that unless progress is made on the future relationship they will regard themselves as released from the first agreement.
- **The new scheme for conditional applications in the UK and the option for EU27** countries to do the same means that many residents of those countries will lack the evidence to prove that they meet the strict legal requirements of "legal residence" and even then they all face the hurdles of inconsistent and often difficult bureaucracies, not only in the UK.
- **The failure to even discuss the deprivation of UK citizens in the EU's right of free movement** leaves many who rely on it for their cross-border careers uncertain about how they will be able to make a living after Brexit.

Jane Golding, said:

*'Imagine a French person living and working in Sheffield is suddenly no longer allowed to move outside Yorkshire to live or to work after Brexit. When we moved to the EU it was to a single territory without internal borders, not one with walls along national boundaries. The decision to defer discussion of our free movement means that many of the most enterprising citizens the UK has produced in the last 40 years have no idea yet how they will continue to earn a living.'*

#### Priorities for citizens' rights in Phase two

In order for citizens' rights not to fall off the radar during the transition and trade talks British in Europe asks both sides for the following:

- A distinct strand for the continued negotiations over citizens' rights, just like what is happening over Ireland – i.e. the same people on both sides must continue to discuss the position as a matter of priority and distinctly from the rest of the UK's future relationship with the EU.
- A clear statement that, whatever happens to the rest of the negotiations, such of our existing rights as are protected by the agreement are safe, and that there will be no backtracking on them under any circumstances.
- That all our remaining rights – including free movement - are safeguarded in Phase 2.

[ENDS]