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## **A MESSAGE FROM JILL MORRIS, HER MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR**

**British Embassy Rome**

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Welcome to the latest edition of my newsletter for British nationals living in Italy. Following the Prime Minister's landmark speech in Florence last month and the fifth round of negotiations in Brussels, I would like to update you on the latest developments on Brexit.

### **PM's Florence Speech**

On 22 September, the Prime Minister delivered [a landmark speech on Europe](#) in Florence. The Chancellor, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU were in attendance, as were a range of leading Italian politicians and business people. The PM set out a **bold and ambitious vision for our future relationship with the EU** once we have left – both in terms of the economic partnership and the security relationship. In her speech, the Prime Minister:

- offered further reassurance to EU citizens living in the UK that they will be able to carry on living their lives as before, and committed to **incorporate our agreement on citizens' rights fully into UK law**. We have also been clear that UK courts will be able to take into account ECJ judgements where there is uncertainty around underlying EU law;
- reassured EU member states that they will not need to pay more or receive less money over the remainder of the current budget plan as a result of our decision to leave. **We will honour the commitments we have made during the period of our membership** – but this can only be resolved as part of the settlement of all the issues;
- set out an **comprehensive vision for our future economic partnership** with the EU, based on a shared commitment to free trade and high standards;
- pledged **unconditional commitment to Europe's Defence and Security**, proposing a new strategic agreement on security, law enforcement and criminal justice.

The speech was well-received by our Italian hosts: Prime Minister Gentiloni described it as “constructive” with “important words on Italians in the UK”. It injected real momentum into the process. And the positive, collaborative tone set by the speech was translated into

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concrete progress in the latest round of negotiations in Brussels, where the UK continued to push for a **swift agreement on citizens' rights** that would provide reassurance for both EU citizens in the UK and British nationals in the EU.

### **Negotiations in Brussels**

On Citizens' Rights, as the Prime Minister has repeatedly emphasised, safeguarding the status of EU citizens in the UK and British nationals in the EU is a priority for the first phase of negotiations. And once again the Commission and the UK have focused on negotiations in a spirit of providing this certainty for citizens as quickly as possible. We have published an updated version of the [joint technical paper](#) with the European Commission. This underlines the significant progress that has been made: around two-thirds of the issues have now been resolved.

- We reached **agreement on all aspects of reciprocal healthcare arrangements** for the purposes of the Withdrawal Agreement.
- On **planned healthcare treatment**, both sides agreed to protect the position of people in the middle of a course of treatment started before exit day, for the duration of that treatment course, irrespective of where they live. This guarantees that patients will be able to complete a course of treatment and provides the certainty that patients will want during a vulnerable time in their lives.
- We continued to make good progress on **protecting social security rights** for those British nationals and EU citizens who are covered by the Withdrawal Agreement. We have confirmed that they will continue to benefit from the coordination rules for aggregating contributions made in the EU and UK both before and after exit and the rights that flow from such contributions, with regard to an **up-rated State Pension and reciprocal healthcare**. These are important points in providing financial security to British nationals and EU citizens allowing them to plan for the future accordingly.
- This is a technical step forward in clarifying that, in practice, anyone who has retired early and moved to Italy before exit - having only ever worked in the UK - **will be able to export their up-rated state pension to Italy** and benefit from the UK covering their health costs here.
- We agreed a **definition for frontier workers**. This builds upon the August round when we agreed in principle to cover frontier workers.

There remain several areas where UK proposals go further than the EU current offer, including **mutual recognition of qualifications and the ability to participate in local elections**. Of particular concern are EU proposals that would not allow UK citizens currently resident in the EU to retain their rights if they move within the EU:

- **the EU position is currently that those covered by the Withdrawal Agreement would lose their permanent residence status**, and thus protection from the Withdrawal
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Agreement, if they were absent for more than 2 years, in line with the Free Movement Directive rules;

- **the UK is prepared to offer settled EU27 citizens a lifetime guarantee to return to the UK provided that this is reciprocated by protecting the right of UK nationals to move within the EU27 whilst retaining the protections afforded by the Withdrawal Agreement.** So in practice, this means that an EU citizen with settled status in the UK will be able to leave and then return to the UK as and when they wish, and vice versa. That is a bold and important offer which we hope the EU will consider carefully.

We are now within touching distance of an agreement. The negotiations have reached the crucial latter stages of discussions where we will be working hard internally and with the Commission to resolve the small number of remaining issues.

### **Engagement with British nationals in Italy**

Last month I held engagement events in Florence and Milan for UK nationals living in Italy, with visiting experts from FCO Consular Directorate and the Department for Exiting the EU in London. **We discussed a range of issues including voting rights, access to higher education and mutual recognition of qualifications.** We have also raised specific issues of concern for you with the Italian Foreign Ministry in Rome. And I was delighted to meet British nationals in Venice when I gave a speech last week to open the 50<sup>th</sup> season of the Circolo Italo-Britannico.

We have received positive feedback from participants. The engagement events offered us a vital opportunity to hear your views directly, which were fed into policy makers and negotiators in London. I look forward to hosting further such events in 2018. In the meantime, we will issue a further newsletter next month. And I am keen to engage with you on social media platforms ([@JillMorrisFCO](#) and [@ukinitaly](#)).

I and my team value your engagement and feedback. We very much look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Jill Morris CMG  
Her Majesty's Ambassador to Italy

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