



A MESSAGE FROM JILL MORRIS, HER MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR

British Embassy Rome

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Following the European Councils in November and December and announcements by the Italian government, I wanted to update you on issues related to the question of Citizens' Rights.

Latest Developments

On the 25 November, at a special European Council, a significant milestone was achieved in the Brexit negotiations. The UK and EU endorsed the final Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration on the future relationship between the UK and EU.

The [Withdrawal Agreement](#) sets out the terms of the UK's smooth and orderly exit while the [Political Declaration](#) sets out the roadmap for our future relationship with the European Union. Both now need to be endorsed by a vote in the UK Parliament, and the European Parliament, to enter into force.

The Prime Minister postponed the UK parliamentary vote in order to seek further assurances on the Northern Ireland backstop. In particular, we are seeking reassurance that neither side would want to use the backstop, and that if it were used it would be a temporary arrangement. In response, the EU27 published a series of conclusions following the European Council meeting on 13 December. They made clear that the EU would seek to ensure that "the backstop would not need to be triggered", and that "it would apply temporarily" if it were enacted.

In her subsequent statement to the House of Commons on 17 December, the Prime Minister pointed out that the European Council Conclusions had legal status, and confirmed that discussions are continuing to seek further assurances. She also confirmed that the parliamentary debate would resume on 7 January 2019, and that a vote would be held the following week.

In the meantime, both the UK and EU have made announcements on their 'no deal' preparations. 'No Deal' is not an outcome that either side wants, but is something that a responsible government should prepare for. On 21 December the Italian Government announced that it would be offering a [reciprocal offer in a no deal scenario to UK nationals resident in Italy](#) before 29 March 2019 to protect their rights.

What's in the Withdrawal Agreement?

The Withdrawal Agreement secures the rights of more than three million EU citizens living in the UK and around one million UK nationals living in the EU; sets out the terms of a time-limited implementation period; and ensures a fair financial settlement.

A 'Backstop' Protocol on Northern Ireland has also been agreed. The Backstop is an insurance policy to avoid the creation of a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Withdrawal Agreement contains an explicit recognition that the backstop can only be temporary and that both sides intend to replace it with alternative arrangements. If the future relationship with the EU is not ready by 1 January 2021, the UK can choose to request an extension of the implementation period, or enter into a backstop arrangement. The proposal for a Northern Ireland-only customs element of the backstop has been replaced by a UK-wide solution, so no hard border would be imposed between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and the constitutional and economic integrity of the UK would also be respected.

What's in the Political Declaration?

We have agreed the creation of a free trade area for goods, including customs co-operation with zero tariffs, and no fees, charges or quantitative restrictions across all goods sectors; the first such agreement between an advanced economy and the EU.

The Declaration also sets out our intention to have a close relationship on services and investment, including financial services; wide ranging cooperation, including on transport and energy; and on fisheries recognising that the UK will be an independent coastal state.

We have also agreed key elements of our future internal security partnership; and continuing cooperation on foreign, security and defence policy. On future mobility, both sides committed to providing visa free travel for short term visits and to facilitate visits for research, study, training and business. Last week, the UK launched a White Paper on the Future Border and Immigration System. The paper proposes a single immigration system based on skills rather than nationality.

After the postponement in December, the final deal will now be put before Parliament during the week of 14 January with MPs having to decide whether to back or reject it. Both the Prime Minister and European leaders are working to provide additional assurances to MPs on the Northern Ireland backstop, but have also made clear that there is no other deal on the table.

I continue to appreciate that, for many, this Christmas period will be a period of uncertainty. As British Ambassador, I remain determined to continue to engage with you via my newsletter and through the many town halls we are holding around Italy. As well as taking the opportunity to answer your questions, we also feedback your concerns voiced during our meetings back to EU Exit teams in London. Please do continue to check our [website](#) for details of forthcoming town halls.

Citizens' Rights – Q & A

I am keen to use this Newsletter to answer a selection of questions I am asked most often, as I did in my previous edition (do have a look at previous newsletters [here](#)). So I hope you will find the selection below helpful.

- **I've thought about getting Italian citizenship but will it affect by UK citizenship which I already hold?** Your UK citizenship would be unaffected by an application for Italian citizenship. The UK permits dual-nationality.
- **I'm not yet of pension age and I pay contributions in Italy and in the UK – should I be worried about my future UK pension?** If you fall under the Withdrawal Agreement (e.g. you are legally resident in Italy before 31 December 2020) your pension rights are protected, including the uprating of state pensions & associated healthcare rights. This applies to those not yet of pension age.
- **I'm a UK national in Italy with a child approaching university age. Will my child be able to study in the UK in the future and be eligible for home fees?** For students commencing studies in the UK before the end of the Implementation Period (31 December 2020), they are eligible for home fees for the duration of their study. Arrangements for study after the end of the Implementation Period are for the next phase of negotiations.
- **I run a business in the UK but come to Italy regularly. Will I need a visa in the future?** In the political declaration, both sides have made a clear commitment not to introduce visas for students, tourists, and temporary business visitors. For other categories of visitors, we don't yet know what arrangements will be put in place.
- **I am a UK national living in Italy with my Italian spouse. In the future we may want to move back to the UK. Is that still possible?** Those who fall under the Withdrawal Agreement will be able to bring family members back from the UK to join them in Italy. Those EU citizens arriving in the UK after the implementation period will be subject to the UK's future immigration system. The Home Office will be publishing their full future immigration proposals in due course.
- **What do I need to do to prepare?** As a UK national in Italy you already need to register with a Comune if you plan to stay in the country for longer than three months. If you meet the Italian government's requirements, please consider applying for permanent residency. The

Citizens Rights agreement gives EU Member States the right to introduce new administrative procedures for British nationals resident in their countries. The Italian government on 21 December [announced](#) that it would be introducing a 'simple and quick declaratory procedure' to protect British nationals living in Italy and advised British nationals to register with their local *Comune*.

- **What's happening to the 'right to vote' for British Nationals overseas?** A Private Members' bill called the Overseas Electors Bill is currently making its way through Parliament. The Bill will give British Nationals who have been overseas for more than 15 years the right to vote in future parliamentary elections. The Bill passed Committee stage in the House of Commons on 14th November and is now at report stage. The date for the Bill to be considered at report stage has not yet been announced. The Government fully supports the Bill before Parliament, which was a manifesto commitment.
- **What happens to UK nationals in the event of no-deal?** No deal is not the outcome that either side wants. But it is a possibility that both sides have a responsibility to prepare for. Both the UK and Italian Governments are drawing up contingency plans, and more information will be released soon. On 21 December the Italian Government [announced](#) that it would be offering a reciprocal offer in a no deal scenario to UK nationals resident in Italy before 29 March 2019 to protect their rights.

Keeping up to date

Lastly, there are a number of ways to stay informed. Please continue to check our [Living in Italy](#) page which we will keep updated on how to secure your rights in Italy. When changes are made, you can receive email alerts by signing up [here](#). [UK Nationals in the EU](#) has a wealth of official information on the UK Exit and how it might affect you. Lastly you can follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) as well as my own [@JillMorrisFCO](#) for further updates.

I will continue to do regular town hall meetings across Italy – do keep an eye out for future announcements and let us know what regions you would like us to visit.

The next town hall meeting will be on [9 January in Florence at St Mark's English church](#). If you haven't received an invitation and would like to attend, please email us at uknationals.inItaly@fco.gov.uk

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We look forward to hearing from you in 2019.

Best regards,

Jill Morris CMG

Her Majesty's Ambassador to Italy

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