



Department
for Exiting the
European Union

Robin Walker MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Exiting the European Union
9 Downing Street
SW1A 2AG

+44 (0)20 7004 1249
correspondence@dexeu.gov.uk

Councillor Annwen Hughes
Council Chairman
Gwynedd Council
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

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Your ref: ER

11th June 2018

Dear Councillor Hughes

Thank you for your letter of 17 May, regarding Gwynedd Council's concerns about Associate European Union Citizenship. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary of State.

As I said in the Written Ministerial Statement of 24 May 2018, in response to a debate on this motion in the House, from the very beginning the Prime Minister has been clear that safeguarding the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU was her first priority for negotiations. The agreement reached and set out in the Withdrawal Agreement text, will provide them with certainty about their rights going forward. It will allow EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU to continue living their lives broadly as they do now in the countries where they now live. It will enable families who have built their lives together in the EU and UK to stay together, giving more certainty about residence, healthcare, pensions and other benefits.

We have carefully considered the recommendations found in the report by Professor Volker Roeben, 'The feasibility of the associate EU citizenship for UK citizens post-Brexit'. However, our understanding of the EU treaty provisions is that only citizens of EU Member States are able to hold EU citizenship. Therefore, when the UK ceases to be a member of the European Union, British nationals will no longer hold EU citizenship, unless they hold dual nationality with another EU Member State.

To that end, associate EU citizenship is not one of our negotiating objectives and is not provided for by the EU treaties. For UK nationals to remain EU citizens after the UK's exit from the EU, an amendment to the EU treaties would be required. Citizenship is the fundamental status of nationals of EU Member States and whilst the EEA EFTA States are in the Single Market their nationals are not EU citizens and as such have more limited rights. Therefore, as I said in the Written Ministerial Statement, this is not something we could realistically expect the EU to agree to.

We know that in the future, many UK nationals will wish to continue to travel, live and work within the European Union, just as EU citizens will still wish to do so in the UK. We look forward to discussing our future relationship with the EU, one which will work in the interest of both sides.

We are committed to securing a deal that works for the entire United Kingdom - for Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and all parts of England. Throughout the discussions, the UK Government will negotiate on behalf of the United Kingdom. We have been clear from the start that the devolved administrations should be fully engaged in this process. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has spoken to ministers from the Welsh and Scottish governments on a number of occasions to update them on the negotiations, including through the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations.

There have now been nine meetings of the Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations. It met most recently on 2 May 2018 and provided the latest opportunity for the devolved administrations to contribute to this process.

At the JMC (EN) meeting, I presented proposals for further engagement with the devolved administrations as we enter the next phase of the EU negotiations.

Thank you for sharing the Council's motion with me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Walker', written in a cursive style.

**ROBIN WALKER MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION**