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19 April 2018

Dear *Ana-Claudia*,

Thank you for your letter of 2 February, regarding your concerns about the rights of EU citizens in the UK after exit. I am responding on behalf of the Prime Minister and apologise for the delay.

We have been clear that we don't regard the referendum result as a vote for the UK to pull up the drawbridge; the UK will remain an open and tolerant country. I can assure you that we value the contribution of all EEA staff working in our health and care sector, and will continue to welcome those with the skills, drive and expertise to make a positive contribution. To address your specific comments regarding the National Health Service (NHS), the latest figures from NHS Digital show that there were over 3,600 more EU nationals working in the NHS in December 2017 than before the referendum result. This means that there are in fact now more doctors and ambulance staff in the NHS from elsewhere in the EU than there were in June 2016.

As we conduct our negotiations, it must be a priority for the UK to regain more control of the numbers of people who come here from Europe. We therefore want to agree an appropriate labour mobility framework that enables UK and EU businesses and professionals to travel, and provide services. The Prime Minister has acknowledged that EU citizens will still want to work and study in the UK – just as UK nationals will want to do in EU countries, helping to shape and drive growth, innovation and enterprise. As part of our future partnership, businesses across the EU and the UK must be able to attract and employ the people they need, and the Prime Minister made clear in her Mansion House speech in March that we are certainly open to discussing how to facilitate these valuable links.

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 the negotiations. EU citizens who have made their lives in the UK have offered a huge contribution to the economic, social and cultural fabric of our country - as, I am sure you will agree UK nationals residing the EU have - and we want them and their families to stay. The agreement reached in December 2017 and set out in the Withdrawal Agreement text, will enable families who have built their lives together in the EU and UK to stay together, providing people with more certainty about residence, healthcare, pensions and other benefits. To be clear, all EU citizens legally resident in the UK before the end of the implementation period, 31 December 2020, will fall under the Citizens' Rights part of Withdrawal Agreement.

Under this agreement, the UK can require EU citizens to apply for settled status under UK law and obtain a document to evidence their right to remain in the UK. Those applying for settled status under the Withdrawal Agreement in the UK will be given until June 2021 to submit their application, which (for those EU citizens in the UK) will not cost more than a British passport. All EU citizens legally resident before the end of the implementation period will be eligible for settled status. EU citizens seeking to move to the UK after the end of the implementation period will be subject to future immigration rules, and the Home Office will be setting out initial proposals for our future immigration arrangements in due course.

As the Prime Minister has said, to leave the EU does not mark an ending. It marks a new beginning for the UK and our relationship with our European allies. We are confident that a future partnership between the UK and EU is in the interests of both sides, so we approach these negotiations anticipating success. As we have made clear, we want to make sure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and is capable of projecting its values, leading the world, and defending itself from security threats. The most important issue for us now must be focussing on negotiating the right future relationship with the EU, one which will endure for years to come.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Kind regards

Martin Call

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION