

Press release – Brexit: MEPs want EU and UK to take care of citizens' rights first – Committee on Petitions – Committee on Employment and Social Affairs – Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

The EU and the UK government should negotiate a deal on the situation and rights of citizens as a matter of urgency and before starting the other Brexit talks, MEPs say.

In a joint hearing organised by the committees of Civil Liberties, Employment and Petitions, most MEPs underlined the “moral duty” to end the uncertainty created for both EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals in the EU since the June referendum.

The EU should let go of the principle that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” in negotiations, because a quick solution for citizens' rights is a matter of priority. “Let's do this first”, they concurred.

Parliament's Brexit coordinator, Guy Verhofstadt, said the House might adopt a resolution on this issue, probably after the summer recess.

In a [plenary resolution adopted on 5 April](#), Parliament stressed that citizens' interests must come first in the negotiations between the EU and the UK government with fair and equal treatment for EU citizens living in the UK and British citizens living in the EU.

Quotes

Claude Moraes (S&D, UK), Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee, said: “Today's hearing shows that the European Parliament stands ready to fulfil its role in the negotiations by working hard with our constituents, our home governments and the EU institutions to ensure the voices of concerned citizens are being heard. Human beings come first, we are not commodities and what happens on citizens' rights sets the tone for the entire negotiation and relationship for a generation to come, so we must get it right”.

Renate Weber (ALDE, RO), Vice-Chair of the Employment Committee, added: “I strongly believe that when thinking about Brexit consequences, there is no greater concern than the fate of EU citizens who study, work and settle in the UK and also visitors, and of those British citizens who work or live in EU 27. Brexit will have a direct impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers and students, on millions of tourists, as citizens' mobility and rights are at the heart of the European project. We have worked hard to

guarantee citizens' uninterrupted access to all kind of benefits, and these rights should be safeguarded."

Cecilia Wikström (ALDE, SE), Chair of the Petitions Committee stated: "The Brexit decision has created uncertainty for three million citizens from other member states living in the UK, as well as for the 1.2 million British citizens currently living in the EU. These people are anxious and frightened about their future and their concerns must therefore be our top priority, and issues related to citizens' rights solved first of all. We shall never forget that this concerns real people, they are not just pawns in the negotiations. This is about basic human values and about common decency. Only by putting the citizens first can we achieve a fair result in the end".

You can catch up with the debate via [Video on Demand](#)