

Brexit Steering Group zeroes in on safeguarding citizens' rights

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News

Parliament's Brexit Steering Group (BSG) met this week to discuss the latest Brexit situation.



Photo credit: Press Association

The BSG, which comprises senior MEPs including Belgian member Guy Verhofstadt and Polish EPP deputy Danuta Hubner, a former EU commissioner, highlighted six aspects of the UK's EU Settlement Scheme including the attribution of pre-settled and settled status.

It also scrutinised the independence of the EU's Independent Monitoring Authority and possible consequences for EU citizens who fail to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme before the application deadline.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included measures to address the situation of vulnerable citizens and the applicability of settled status rights to all EU citizens who have not also sought British citizenship.

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A Parliament statement issued after the meeting read, "The Brexit Steering Group will continue to examine these issues with the new UK government and pursue its work in liaison with civil society organisations representing EU citizens living in the UK."

"As regard the EU-27, it was also agreed that, in liaison with civil society organisations representing UK citizens in the EU-27, the application of the Withdrawal Agreement in the 27 Member States should be examined."

Reacting to the outcome of the meeting, Roger Casale, of New Europeans which campaigns for citizen rights, told this site: "The Brexit Steering Group has said that it wants to take more evidence from civil society organisations working with EU citizens. That is a very welcome announcement."

"So far close working relationships have been developed with New Europeans and two or three other organisations giving voice to the concerns of EU citizens and Britons abroad - but neither New Europeans nor the other groups, important as they are, can be fully representative."

"We stand ready to assist the Brexit Steering Group in making sure that all voices are heard and that all EU citizens in the UK feel represented" **Roger Casale, New Europeans**

Casale, a former Labour MP, said, "We stand ready to assist the Brexit Steering Group in making sure that all voices are heard and that all EU citizens in the UK feel represented."

"It is very good news that the Brexit Steering Group recognises the need for EU citizens in the UK to have a physical proof of status. Our EU Green Card for Europe proposal would achieve this aim."

"We also look to the Brexit Steering Group to ensure the European Parliament makes good on its December 2017 resolution and insists on a guarantee for the free movement rights of Britons in Europe. An EU Green Card would also be a great way to achieve this objective."

Parliament has made safeguarding citizens' rights one of its three red lines throughout the Brexit process. MEPs have a legal right to sign off on any deal between the EU and UK and which is also approved by the UK Parliament.

Britain's protracted EU exit has been put off until 31 January, the third time it has been delayed. The

UK will go to the polls in a general election next month in what has been widely dubbed the “Brexit election.”

Meanwhile, the outgoing European Council president Donald Tusk has taken one last parting shot at the UK, attacking its perceived attempts to “bilateralise” the Brexit negotiations. This is a reference to alleged attempts by the UK to hold separate talks with some EU members outside the formal Brexit talks with Michel Barnier.

In a speech, Tusk said, “The UK is still a member of the European Union, and will remain so, until the end of my term. But I will not pretend that this is some kind of success, because Brexit may happen at the beginning of next year.”

“We also look to the Brexit Steering Group to ensure the European Parliament makes good on its December 2017 resolution and insists on a guarantee for the free movement rights of Britons in Europe” **Roger Casale, New Europeans**

“I did everything in my power to avoid the confrontational no-deal scenario and extend the time for reflection and a possible British change of heart.”

Tusk, due to step down soon and be replaced by Belgium’s former Prime Minister Charles Michel, said, “I have been called a romantic and an anglophile, both terms, in my opinion, quite suitable and merited. Most importantly, however, Brexit hasn’t divided us.”

“The EU27 have maintained extraordinary self-discipline and loyalty among themselves, despite London’s attempts to ‘bilateralise’ these negotiations.”

He admitted to an audience in Bruges that “I wouldn’t have dared to say [this] a few months ago as I could be fired for being too frank. And today, it is simply too late to impeach Donald, at least the European one. In fact, I envy John Bercow [the former House of Commons speaker] that he can finally, honestly say what he thinks about Brexit.”

About the author

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