



The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

Brussels, 02 February 2018

Dear Prime Minister May,

I have taken note with great regret and disappointment of the comments you made this week during your state visit to China that the UK intends to restrict access for EU citizens from March 2019. As a Member of the European Parliament, I cannot agree with this view and, for the benefit of both sides involved in the negotiations, I would encourage you to reconsider this position.

From the outset of the discussions that began in 2017, the position of the Union was clear - the rights of EU citizens are non-negotiable, and an unnecessary restriction of access, such as the imposing of visas, is a red line that we will not cross. This is not for lack of willingness to reach a compromise, but because we come to the negotiating table with the belief that the interests of our citizens is our number one priority. Moreover, negotiations should be based on the principles of equality and reciprocity. It would not be fair for the UK to continue to enjoy the benefits of the single market, while limiting freedom of movement.

The EU citizens who live, work or study lawfully in the UK have contributed significantly to your economy, as you rightfully admitted yourself in the open letter you published last October. For example, the British National Health Service relies heavily on doctors and staff from EU member states, including from my home country, Romania. Like the NHS, there are thousands of UK businesses that are looking across the channel to fill positions. This is why I believe the comments you made will increase uncertainty during an already complicated withdrawal process.

The EU and its four freedoms are more than economics. The EU was - and remains - a project of peace, which used solidarity to build prosperity. Freedom of movement might have begun as a means to support the economies of EU countries by providing a mobile work force, but it has evolved to encourage tolerance and a better understanding between people from different cultures. After centuries of conflict and harmful stereotypes, Europe rebuilt itself as a place where people are proud to live and be associated with. Therefore, I wish that the comments we make during these sad times of Brexit, should not add further insult to injury.

Having said all this, I wish to stress that I count on your good judgement to make the right decisions in the months to come. I know we both want what is best for our people and, in the end, this will prevail over all other considerations or distractions. In order for both the EU and Britain to reach a deal and develop a privileged relationship, not just economically, we need to work together and find the middle way, starting with putting people first.

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Țapardel
Member of the European Parliament