

High Commission briefing for British expat representatives on island

The British High Commissioner Matthew Kidd held a meeting with representatives of the British community in Cyprus at his Nicosia residence on 23 November in order to brief them on the current priorities of the British government in Cyprus and exchange views in a range of areas.

Following the result of the referendum of 23 June, Britain will in due course be leaving the European Union. The High Commissioner outlined the processes currently being followed within government to prepare for the Brexit negotiations in order to try to achieve the best possible outcome for the UK. These negotiations are expected to start before the end of March 2017. Until these negotiations are complete, there will be no change in the way that UK citizens can travel, live, work, retire or collect their pensions in an EU country.

While the UK's future relationship with the EU is still to be determined, the High Commissioner stressed that the UK is not leaving Europe. Britain will remain a close friend, ally and trading partner with its European neighbours, including Cyprus. The government's intention post-Brexit is to strengthen bilateral links within Europe, as well as with the UK's close friends in North America, the Commonwealth and other important partners around the world. Those new relationships should reflect the kind of cooperative relationship that close friends and allies enjoy.

In planning for Brexit, the High Commissioner explained that the government wants to make sure that the concerns of British nationals currently living within the EU are properly understood and taken into account. Similarly, the government is conscious of the concerns of many Cypriots who currently live or study in the UK and how Brexit may affect them. Areas that the government have already identified as of concern to British nationals within other EU countries include healthcare, benefits, residency, work, travel, property, tax, legal and nationality issues.

Aside from Brexit, the High Commissioner outlined other priority areas of work, including UK support for a settlement of the Cyprus issue. He also stressed that the safety, welfare and livelihoods of UK citizens overseas will continue to be a top priority for the UK Government. He offered a number of top tips to Brits living in Cyprus, based on the type of the requests the High Commission consular team frequently receives, as follows:

- British nationals living in Cyprus as residents should apply for their MEU1 form (yellow slip). Further information on how to do this can be found here: <http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/CRMD/crmd.nsf/All/69E690A161D174D6C2257D2C0045750B?OpenDocument>
- The Immigration Department has advised that British nationals who have been living in Cyprus since before its accession to the EU (2004) should arrange to have their Alien Registration Card (ARC) converted into an MEU1 (yellow slip). This may affect those, in particular state pensioners, who are renewing the medical cards.

- Passport applications are now processed in Belfast. The majority of the application process is now to be completed on line: <https://www.gov.uk/overseas-passports>
- Make sure you complete the emergency contact details section in your existing or new passport.
- The contact number for the International Pension Centre is +44 191 218 7777. Call either early morning or later if the lines are busy.

British nationals in Cyprus can keep up to date with the work of the High Commission through their website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/world/cyprus>), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ukincyprus/>) and on Twitter (<https://mobile.twitter.com/ukincyprus>)