



## Activities in and around ETTW

No 15 – December 2017

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### I. News from Board and Working Groups

#### Current issues

Expatriates' homecoming continues to be problematic, especially with partners from third countries. And the high political tensions around migration makes it difficult to find fair solutions. Nevertheless, *Danes Worldwide* has had constructive, if difficult, contacts with the Danish Government about the issues and will report back if positive results are obtained. So will *Swedes Worldwide* who are working politically with the same questions and in addition face the question of a special income tax.

*The European Latvian Association* is engaged in counterbalancing negative attitudes toward expats returning home and *l'Union de Francophones à l'Étranger* has set up a special team to assist the homecoming of their expatriates. Schools and education figure high on its list of priorities.

Teaching the mother tongue to young expats is also high on the agenda of member organizations. *Vlamingen in de Wereld* and the *Council for Maltese Living Abroad* are both working on this, focusing especially on digital solutions.

ETTW has had very useful contacts with the *Secretary of State for Portuguese Communities Abroad at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. And the Board could welcome its representative, Ms. Tavares, who presented the ministry's priorities. Currently the Ministry targets, among others, its large communities in Europe and in Latin America, in particular in Venezuela. It attempts to enhance cooperation between European consular services to face major incidents which have occurred in third countries (support for European victims). It is also supporting the projects being developed by Portuguese unions targeted at the social inclusion and participation in the work place of Portuguese and Polish migrants in the UK.



The Secretary of State for Portuguese Communities also prioritizes the teaching of Portuguese language abroad, not only through digital platforms developed by the Camoes Institute, but also through its network of Portuguese teachers abroad.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs agrees that online voting for expats is interesting also for Portugal where voting and registration is still complicated for citizens abroad, although new mechanisms of automatic registration for citizens abroad are currently being analyzed by the Portuguese parliament.

Diaspora policies have a high attention in Portugal where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organizes annual meetings for diasporas interested in investing in their home country. Particular attention is also paid to the network of Emigrant Support Offices resulting from Cooperation Agreements between the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Portuguese municipalities. These are based on the principles of availability for care and proximity to the citizens who plan to live abroad (information on social and working conditions abroad) as well as to the ones that come back to Portugal (promoting entrepreneurship, attracting investment, fiscal issues and the recognition of foreign diplomas) (see also Danes Worldwide).

## **The ETTW online voting campaign**

In October Europeans Throughout the World launched a crowdfunding campaign to introduce internet voting for European expats all over the world. Almost 80 million Europeans live and work in a country other than their country of origin. Most of them have the right to vote in both their home country's national elections and in elections to the European Parliament. But very few of them actually use that right, due to outdated voting methods and complicated registration.

The donations in this crowdfunding campaign will be used actively to organize and set up awareness raising events to introduce election rules and procedures which permit i-voting in the future.



Technically the project has been successfully launched. Hundreds of campaign templates have been mailed to member organizations, partner associations, other expat bodies, the press and the relevant institutions at European level. But the impact has not yet been satisfactory and the Board decided to upgrade the effort. Especially the crucial relay effect whereby individual expats discover the online voting campaign via member organizations' websites. The Board discussed the security issue (hacking) and decided to address this question during the campaign.

## **Education for young expatriates**

The Board considered strategies on the education of expat children and internet solutions for learning the native language. Key elements will be: access to knowledge of the mother tongue and the culture of the country of origin through online tools; improving the mutual recognition of diplomas, especially at high school level, and how to develop a European policy to attract talents and avoid unnecessary brain drain.

## **Formal services for expatriates.**

Referring to the discussion at the last Board meeting on increasing problems for expatriates with formalities such as passport renewals, pensions and taxes, renewals of drivers' licenses etc. it was decided that ETTW should make this theme one of its coming priorities.

## **A European diaspora conference**

With the increasing importance of active diaspora policies in a growing number of European states, the support for this ETTW proposal to organize a European diaspora conference is now considerable.

The Board agreed to promote the following themes for such a conference: Language and culture training for diasporas; diasporas as resources of talent, innovation and investments; the narrative of positive effects of migration and modern ways of consular service and assistance.

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## II. News from Member Organisations

### Danes Worldwide

#### **Director of Educational Programs appointed**

A lot has happened this fall within Danes Worldwide. As of October 1st, Mr. Paw Kraglund has been promoted to the position Director of Educational Programs.

This promotion significantly strengthens one of our core areas of activity, and we are all delighted with it. We have prepared a business plan for the instructional programs and look forward to working on our strategic goals related to Summer School, the online courses, and the Learning Centers in Bangkok and Dubai.

This positive step liberates resources for intensifying our advocacy work and our work to provide services for the key stakeholders, our individual members in Denmark and across the world and our corporate members.

#### **Meeting with Immigration Minister Inger STØJBERG**

In continuation of our participation at the annual political “people’s summit”, we set up a meeting in October with Immigration Minister Inger Støjberg. The purpose was to discuss the challenges experienced by Danes wishing to settle with their foreign families in Denmark. Previously, the “26 year rule” enabled Danes having held citizenship for 26 years or more to settle in Denmark with a spouse not holding a citizenship within the EU. After that rule was removed in June 2016, it has become very difficult for such a mixed couple to prove that it has a collective connection to Denmark that is stronger than that to the country of residence, especially if the couple has resided for many years outside Denmark.



Of course, other factors are indicators of a connection – regular visits to Denmark, visits from Denmark, other kinds of contact, knowledge of Danish on the part of foreign spouse, etc; however current legislation is unclear as to how such factors are assessed.

Danes Worldwide has drawn attention to the difficulty and called for clear regulations so that a Danish citizen will always be able to settle in Denmark with his or her family.

Our dialogue with the Minister and her senior officials, was a positive one. It is agreed that we will continue the dialogue as the legislation on immigration is under revision (target horizon of Spring 2018).

### **Annual meeting at the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI)**

Danes Worldwide has been a member of the Confederation for a number of years. Among the many benefits of membership is our joint annual seminar on topics related to a global mobile workforce. The next seminar will be held on 24 January 2018 at the DI headquarters in Copenhagen. This time, a key topic is the new system for ‘earning’ one’s government pension.

Another membership benefit is our participation in the annual DI summit where we are briefed on the political agenda for industry in Denmark and have the opportunity to meet our corporate members, politicians, and other members of our network.

This year’s keynote speaker, Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary, stressed the importance of working to achieve the 17 global UN goals and focused on the challenges associated with equal rights for women and girls.

### **Foreign students a benefit for Denmark**

During October, Danes Worldwide met with President Anders Bjarklev of the Technical University of Denmark to discuss the importance of enabling Danish students living abroad to study at universities in Denmark. The university recently published a study, performed by the research organization Damvad,



showing the impact of its international graduates on the national economy during the years 2007-2011. Study findings highlights include:

- During their studies and for 8 years after graduation, the typical international graduate contributes DKK 1.2 million to the national economy of Denmark.
- That amount includes DKK 800,000 paid in income and excise taxes.
- When expenses are deducted to account for the cost of offering the international graduate an opportunity to study, providing health services for him or her, etc., the net contribution is DKK 500,000 in the government's coffers.
- A year after graduation, just under 60% of the university's international graduates still live in Denmark; after 8 years, the figure is 40%.
- Among international graduates living in Denmark 8 years after graduation, 85% hold full time jobs.

The study is significant and relevant for members of Danes Worldwide in light of the ongoing discussion whether foreign students and children of expat Danes are entitled to subsidies for living expenses during university studies. The study undertaken by the Technical University of Denmark shows that foreign students provide a business benefit to Denmark, and that is key in our political work and our work on behalf of members and their children.

### **Meeting with Portuguese diaspora in Lisbon**

In October, Secretary General of Danes Worldwide visited top officials in Lisbon to learn how Portugal looks after its expats. Portugal has over 5 million citizens living abroad – about half of them were born in Portugal – and the government goes to great lengths to keep these expats connected to the country. Portuguese citizens, as an example, retain the right to vote in parliamentary elections and elect four members of parliament to represent their interests. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a dedicated Secretary of State has responsibility for citizens living abroad, and more than 80 Portuguese cultural institutes have



been set up all over the world to offer e.g. courses in the culture and language of Portugal. Finally, the meetings started a contact with the key officials in Lisbon dealing with diaspora matters – these have now been invited to the ETTW meetings. We hope to be able to welcome our Portuguese friends as members of the ETTW in 2018! (See also News from the Board, current issues)

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## **Finland Society – Suomi-Seura**

### **Expatriate Finns finally get right to postal voting**

Finland's 100 th Independence Day was celebrated on December 6, 2017. The national centenary celebration year saw the Finnish democracy strengthened on November 21 when the Parliament changed the Voting Law, allowing vote by mail (postal vote) to expatriate citizens and to those Finns residing abroad during the whole time of elections.

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament and its secretariat the Finland Society have campaigned for 17 years to allow mail voting to expatriate Finns. Mail vote is widely in use around the world, in about 47 countries, such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and in 23 European countries, for instance in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain.

This is a historic change in Finland's voting conditions. It brings 242 096 (in 2015) expat citizens with voting rights a true possibility to participate in elections – otherwise hampered by long, tedious and expensive travels to polling stations. These voters constitute at least 5.4 % of all voters, equaling in size the number of Swedish-speaking Finnish citizens with voting rights. If they had their own electoral district, they would get about 10 representatives to the 200-strong Parliament. (Around 300,000 Finnish nationals live outside Finland, while those identifying themselves in national censuses as being of ethnic Finnish background number at least two million).

A strong argument in favour of postal vote was that it brings expatriate citizens in an equal standing in the event of voting. The absence of a legally



accountable supervising election official was deemed to weigh less in a well-argued and restricted comparison to the constitutional responsibility of the state to enhance each citizen's participation in the society. Mail vote ameliorates voting conditions and rises polling turnout. The President will sign the law on November 1, 2018 and mail vote will be in use for the first time in the next parliamentary elections in April 2019.

The Finnish Expatriate Parliament adopted in its 20th anniversary session in June 2017 the resolution number 2/2017, which proposes that *« before postal voting becomes effective, the Finnish government will organize an understandable and effective information campaign about it by utilizing the multiple channels of both domestic and expatriate Finnish media. Information shall also be disseminated to Finland Societies, Finnish parishes, Suomi Schools, and any other organizations that may then pass the information on to their members»*. <http://www.usp.fi/toiminta/index2.php?sivu=1160>

It is important that expat voters and temporarily abroad residing citizens with voting rights know where to order their voting documents in time. They need to understand how to close their ballot inside a voting envelope along with a signed cover letter, including testimonials by two over 18-year-old witnesses of any nationality but who are not family members. The envelope then needs to be addressed to a correct electoral district in Finland, and needs to arrive in time. By encouraging to update personal information, mail vote can bring synergy advantages to engagement with public authorities.

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## Swedes Worldwide

### Main issues for the upcoming year

Swedes Worldwide are currently preparing to send out the resolutions from the Swedish Expats Parliament, some of which we wrote about in the last edition of this newsletter. A total of 21 resolutions will be sent out to government ministries, government agencies, politicians, political parties and private corporations as well as published on [www.sviv.se/](http://www.sviv.se/). In the upcoming year





we will of course be working with all these issues but with a particular focus on the following three:

- The lowering of the SINK tax, the special tax for Swedish residents abroad, which will be raised from 20 to 25 percent in January 2018.
- Simplifying the rules for Swedish citizens to move home and bringing family members with them if they are from non-EU- countries, as this is currently hard and families may have to split up for a long time in order to move to Sweden together.
- Making it easier to vote for expats in the 2018 parliamentary election in Sweden. Just like ETTW Swedes Worldwide want to simplify voting as a Swedish citizen abroad, both by promoting i-voting and the reinstatement of an election constituency for the Swedes living abroad, as well as helping to make sure all Swedes living abroad have the opportunity to vote in the upcoming election.

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### **III. News from Partner Organisations and other Sources**

#### **EU Citizenship report 2017- Strengthening citizens' rights in a Union of democratic change**

The third Citizenship report from the European Commission is now in its final stage of adoption. The European Council has already issued supportive conclusions and the European Parliament is now ready to adopt its own report in Plenary in a vote on December 12.



The report has several new initiatives with cross border implications, such as , best practices on elections, initiatives on ID documents/residence documents and Emergency Travel Documents.

Special attention is given to EU citizens voting in a country other than their country of nationality, and welcome practices making it easier for them to vote in these elections as non-nationals (e.g. individual letters, online registration on the electoral roll, e-voting). Such practices will benefit all EU citizens.

Responding to a request by the European Parliament to investigate the use of e-voting, the Commission will explore how using digital society tools can contribute to democratic debate, and improve the electoral process and democratic participation, including for mobile EU citizens, young people and underrepresented groups.

In 2018, the Commission will promote best practices which help citizens vote and stand for EU elections, including on retaining the right to vote when moving to another Member State and cross-border access to political news, to support turnout and broad democratic participation in the perspective of the 2019 European elections.

ETTW took part in the initial consultation for the 2017 report and draw attention to several other obstacles for EU citizens on the move also identified in the report.

Further reading: [2017 EU Citizenship Report](#)

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## **IV. Interesting Reading**

### **EU puts an end to geographic discrimination for online shopping**

The European Institutions have reached a political agreement to end unjustified geoblocking for consumers wishing to buy products or services



online within the EU. The new rules will boost ecommerce for the benefit of consumers and businesses who take advantage of the growing European online market.

The decision of November 20 puts an end to unjustified discrimination when shopping online. With the new rules, Europeans will be able to choose from which website they wish to buy, without being blocked or re-routed. This will be a reality by Christmas next year to allow in particular small traders to adapt.

Ending unfair geoblocking is a great step forward for consumers and the building of a real Digital Single Market. Along with the end of roaming charges and portability, EU citizens will be able to buy their new furniture online, book hotel rooms or use their credit card across borders, like at home.

For citizens this means they will be able to buy their new electrical goods online, rent a car or get their concert tickets across borders as they do at home. It will ensure that they no longer face barriers such as being asked to pay with a debit or credit card issued in another country. For businesses, this means more legal certainty to operate cross-border.

A [Commission survey](#) found that geoblocking practices were identified in 63% of all websites assessed. It shows that in 2015, less than 40% of websites allowed cross-border customers to complete a purchase.

The new rules define **three specific situations where no justification and no objective criteria for a different treatment between customers from different EU Member States are conceivable from the outset.**

These are:

- ***The sale of goods without physical delivery.***
- ***The sale of electronically supplied services.***
- ***The sale of services provided in a specific physical location.***

The Regulation does not impose an obligation to sell and does not harmonise prices. It does however address discrimination in access to goods and services



in cases where it cannot be objectively justified (e.g. by VAT obligations or different legal requirements).

Next step for the Commission is to bring down prices of cross-border parcel delivery, which still discourage people from buying and selling products across the EU.

Further information: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-4781\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-4781_en.htm)

## Public consultations on a European Labour Authority and a European Social Security Number launched

In his State of the Union Address 2017 at the European Parliament, President Juncker announced plans for a European Labour Authority that would ensure that EU rules on labour mobility are enforced in a fair, simple and effective way and to create a European Social Security Number (ESSN) that should simplify and modernise citizens' interaction with administrations in a wide range of policy areas.

The European Commission has now launched a public consultation that in parts could be of interest for ETTW and its member organisations and partners. The aim of this public consultation is to collect the views and opinions of interested parties in order to inform the impact assessment process and is open **from 27 November – 7 January, 2018**.

The consultation covers questions related to outstanding challenges for labour mobility, capacity-building and co-operation between national authorities, including information and assistance, as well as social security in cross-border situations.

The questions and options presented are interesting from an ETTW perspective.

Further information: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/59f7efb9-ecac-52b0-7230-cb5cf2488ea2> + Fact sheet on the European Labour Authority 



## **BREXIT: Agreement in principle on citizens' rights!**

On December 8, The European Commission recommended to the European Council (Article 50) to conclude that sufficient progress has been made in the first phase of the Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom. The Commission's assessment is based on a [joint report](#) agreed by the negotiators of the Commission and the United Kingdom Government.

Sufficient progress has finally been achieved in each of the three priority areas of citizens' rights, the dialogue on Ireland / Northern Ireland, and the financial settlement.

On citizens rights this means in short that the life choices made by EU citizens living in the United Kingdom will be protected. The rights of EU citizens living in the United Kingdom and United Kingdom citizens in the EU27 will remain the same after the United Kingdom has left the EU. It has also been agreed that any administrative procedures will be cheap and simple for EU citizens in the United Kingdom.

The UK Government has published two succinct summaries on the reciprocal rights for EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU:

### **1. Agreement on rights for EU citizens and their families**

The agreement reached for EU citizens and their family members is:

- People who arrive by 29 March 2019 and have been continuously and lawfully living here for 5 years will be able to apply to stay indefinitely by getting 'settled status'. That means these citizens will be free to live here, have access to public funds and services and go on to [apply for British citizenship](#).
- People who arrive by 29 March 2019, but won't have been here lawfully for 5 years when we leave the EU, will be able to apply to stay until they have reached the 5-year threshold. They can then also apply for settled status.



- Family members who are living with, or join, EU citizens in the UK by 29 March 2019 will also be able to apply for settled status after 5 years in the UK.
- Close family members (spouses, civil partners and unmarried partners, dependent children and grandchildren, and dependent parents and grandparents) will be able to join EU citizens after exit under these rules, where the relationship existed on 29 March 2019 and continues to exist when they wish to come to the UK.

EU citizens with settled status and temporary permission to stay will continue to have the same access as they currently do to healthcare, pensions and other benefits.

More information is available in the [joint report](#) about the agreement reached between the UK and the EU on citizens' rights.

[Case studies](#) giving examples of how individual EU citizens' residence status in the UK will be affected by the UK's exit from the EU are available.

## **2. Agreement on rights for UK nationals and their families**

The agreement reached for UK nationals and their family members is:

- UK nationals, as well as their family members covered by the agreement, who are lawfully residing in a EU27 Member State by 29 March 2019, will be able to continue to reside in that Member State.
- Children born or adopted outside of a UK nationals' resident Member State after the 29 March 2019 will also be covered by this agreement.
- Close family members (spouses, civil partners and unmarried partners, dependent children and grandchildren and dependent parents and grandparents) will be able to join UK nationals in their Member State of residence after exit under these rules, where the relationship existed on 29 March 2019 and continues to exist when they wish to move to join their UK national family member.



- EU27 Member States may require UK nationals and their family members covered by the agreement to apply to obtain a status conferring the right of residence and/or obtain a residency document. Administrative procedures for applications for status will be transparent, smooth and streamlined. Where an application is required to obtain status, UK nationals will have at least two years to submit their applications. Residence documents will be issued free of charge or for a charge not exceeding that imposed on nationals for the issuing of similar documents. Further information on these administrative procedures will be provided when available.
- UK nationals and their family members covered by the agreement will be able to be absent from their Member State of residence for up to 5 years without losing their right to return.
- UK nationals and their family members covered by the agreement will continue to have the same access as they currently do to healthcare, pensions and other benefits.

More information is available in the [Joint Report from the negotiators of the EU and the UK on progress](#) and in the [Comparison Table of the UK and EU positions on Citizens' Rights](#).

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**Thank you all for progress made during the year and wishing you all a healthy and fulfilling 2018!!**

Contributions to ETTW News Service from Member organisations and Partners are welcome to the ETTW News Editor: Ylva Tivéus [ylva@tiveus.eu](mailto:ylva@tiveus.eu)

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