

**Written evidence submitted by the Ambassador of Ireland  
to the UK (FRE0140)**

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Ambasáid na hÉireann  
Embassy of Ireland



30 September 2020

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP  
Chair, Committee on the future Relationship with the European Union  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Hilary

Thank you for your letter of 27 July concerning Ireland's commitment to maintaining the Common Travel Area (CTA) and its associated rights and privileges. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to you and the Committee on this important matter.

As you know, the CTA is a long-standing arrangement between the United Kingdom and Ireland dating back to the 1920s, whereby British citizens can move freely to live, work, and study in Ireland on the same basis as Irish citizens, and vice versa. It provides for a number of associated rights and privileges including access to employment, healthcare, education, social protection, and social housing, as well as the right to vote in certain elections. The CTA pre-dates our accession to the then European Community and will remain in place after the end of the current transition period.

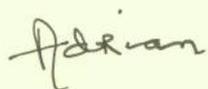
The CTA is of great benefit to both UK and Irish citizens and is a key example of continued positive British-Irish engagement and cooperation. It is estimated that there are approximately 115,000 UK citizens ordinarily resident in Ireland, the majority of whom have been resident there for over four years. They form an integral and valued part of Irish society and, in accordance with the CTA, their rights and privileges will be protected and maintained following the end of the transition period. From a North/South perspective, the CTA is also an important enabler of the cross-border mobility central to the lives and livelihoods of the people of Northern Ireland and the border region.

As you note in your letter, in May 2019 the UK and Irish Governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which both sides committed to upholding the CTA in all circumstances. The maintenance of the CTA was recognised as a common objective throughout the EU-UK negotiations on the Withdrawal Agreement, and the associated Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland includes provisions to deliver on this objective. Ireland remains committed to upholding all aspects of the CTA and maintaining in full the associated rights and privileges that UK citizens currently enjoy in Ireland.

A number of important steps have been undertaken to ensure that the CTA is fully secured in operational terms across various sectors. On 1 February 2019, the UK and Ireland signed a Convention on Social Security; it provides that current reciprocal arrangements relating to social security contributions, pensions and other benefits will be maintained for the future. Similarly, the relevant Government Departments are currently working closely with their UK counterparts to ensure the necessary arrangements (through sectoral MoUs) are also put in place in the areas of education and health care. The Irish Government is fully committed to finalise these arrangements in the near future.

Over the coming months, we will also ensure that these reciprocal arrangements are communicated effectively - so that all citizens, British and Irish, are aware of their continued rights and privileges under the CTA. I hope the foregoing is of assistance to the Committee and wish to thank you for all the work you are doing to ensure that the Withdrawal Agreement and the associated Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol are fully and faithfully implemented.

Best personal wishes



Adrian O'Neill  
Ambassador of Ireland



## Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Email: [freucom@parliament.uk](mailto:freucom@parliament.uk) Website: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/366/committee-on-the-future-relationship-with-the-european-union/>

27 July 2020

HE Adrian O'Neill  
Ambassador of Ireland to the United Kingdom

Dear Adrian,

The House of Commons Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union is inquiring into the progress of ongoing negotiations between the UK and the EU and the implementation of the Citizens' Rights provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The rights of EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU was an important and sensitive issue in the Article 50 negotiations with both sides agreeing that it was essential to uphold as far as possible the rights accrued by citizens in both of these categories during the UK's membership of the EU.

As you know, the UK and Irish governments have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Common Travel Area and associated reciprocal rights and privileges, and issued a joint statement saying that they are committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that the agreed Common Travel Area rights and privileges are protected. This should ensure that neither Irish citizens in the UK nor British citizens in Ireland are required to take any action to protect their status and rights associated with the CTA.

I have written to the Ambassadors of the other EU26 Member States asking what preparations they are making to secure the rights of UK nationals resident in their country. In this regard, the arrangements between the UK and Ireland are clearly very different to those agreed by the UK and the other EU26 Member States. However, I wanted to give you the opportunity to provide your perspective on how Ireland is working with the British Government to ensure that the rights of UK nationals and their family members are secured in Ireland under the CTA or otherwise.

As I have said in my letter to the other national Ambassadors of EU Member States to the UK based in London, all replies that the Committee receives will, in due course, be published on its website.

Should you have any questions at all, the Clerk of our Committee, Gordon Clarke, will be very happy to help. He can be contacted at [clarkeg@parliament.uk](mailto:clarkeg@parliament.uk).

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

**Hilary Benn**  
Chair of the Committee