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Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham St
London SW1P 4DF

London 27 January 2017,

Dear Ms Rudd,

I'm a French MP representing French citizens living in Northern Europe including the UK and I'm writing to you with regards to the urgent need to review and simplify the process of applying for permanent residence.

I understand it is not compulsory for EU nationals to apply for documentation confirming their right of residence and that the rights of EU nationals living in the UK remain unchanged while the UK is a member of the EU. Many of my constituents and indeed other EU nationals have however been very anxious to obtain permanent residency given the absence of guarantee from the government that their rights will not be eroded in any way after the UK leaves the EU. I am sure you will agree that intending, like the government has, to secure the status of EU nationals living in the UK is one thing, unequivocally guaranteeing their rights and status another. I deeply regret of course that this government has not taken the second approach which would have reassured my constituents and other EU nationals that their rights to live, work, access healthcare and draw a pension are not in danger.

The great uncertainty surrounding EU nationals' rights post-Brexit has been a source of great angst which I have witnessed first-hand among my constituents. This has been made worst by the over-complicated process of applying for permanent residence which I believe places unnecessary administrative burdens on applicants. Many are struggling to provide the required level of supporting evidence with their applications, leaving them at risk of seeing their applications rejected and being asked to "make arrangements to leave". EU nationals are not second-class citizens and those who have been lawfully residents for years and have every right to be in the UK and to remain in the country as permanent residents should not be the victims of unnecessary bureaucracy.

It is well within the government's power to simplify the application process and go beyond the mere digitisation of applications by rolling back some of the complexity that has been introduced over the last few years. The current form is six times as long as it used to be back in 2008 and could therefore be shortened. Government databases could also be used and the requirement to list every single absence from the UK modified to a requirement that only ask applicants if they have been outside the UK for more than 6 months during a 12 month period, in accordance with EU law. I will also urge you, as others have already done, to scrap the requirement for students and self sufficient persons from the EU to hold a "comprehensive sickness insurance" as it currently unfairly disqualifies EU citizens such as carers, homemakers, disabled people and students from UK residency. Notwithstanding the above, reform of the application process also appears necessary if the Home Office is to be able to deal with current and future applications in a reasonable amount of time.

As the government has recognised, EU nationals living in the UK – from workers, carers, home makers and retirees – have, over the years, made fantastic contribution to society and the British economy. Many of them also consider the UK as their home. There is for them a process to follow to be issued with documentation confirming their right of residence but it is clear that this process requires urgent simplification if they are to be treated fairly.

Yours sincerely,
Christophe Premat