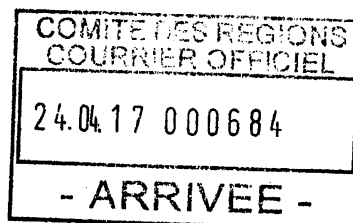


Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs  
Fiona Hyslop MSP

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Markku Markkula Esq.  
President  
European Committee of the Regions  
Rue Belliard 101  
1040 Brussels



Our ref/Ar faidhle:  
18 April 2017

*Dear Markku*

Thank you very much indeed for your letter on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 enclosing copy of the European Committee of the Regions' resolution on the implications for local and regional government of the UK's intention to withdraw from the European Union. I was very interested to see the points the resolution raised.

I agree entirely with the overarching sentiment that we need to put the rights of EU citizens in the centre of forthcoming negotiations on the UK's departure from the EU. The Scottish Government has been pressing the UK Government for some time to guarantee the "right to remain" of the 181,000 EU citizens who have chosen to make Scotland their home. To that end, I am pleased to see that the European Commission negotiation guidelines make an explicit commitment to secure an early agreement on the rights of EU Nationals. We are also clear that the rights of Scots as EU citizens must be protected during the progress of the negotiations.

I note the reference to the UK Great Repeal Bill in your resolution. The Scottish Government is deeply concerned that this Bill could see competencies removed from the Scottish Parliament which would be wholly unacceptable. In our view, the White Paper that the UK Government published on the Bill presents a very real risk that in devolved areas such as agriculture, fisheries and the environment, powers will be taken back by the UK Government after Brexit. The Scottish Government will continue to oppose any such move.

I would be happy to meet with the Conference of Presidents if a delegation comes to Scotland or indeed in Brussels. In the first instance can I ask your office to get in touch with [REDACTED], Head of European Engagement ([REDACTED] 00 44 131 [REDACTED]) so that we can take this forward. I understand that the Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee of the Scottish Parliament will also make contact shortly to offer a meeting with the Committee.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards  
Fiona Hyslop

FIONA HYSLOP