

Joan McAlpine MSP
Convener
Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

21 March 2017

Dear Convener,

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee: *EU Migration and EU Citizens' Rights*, 3rd Report, 2017

Thank you for providing the UK Government with a copy of the above report.

As you may be aware, the Government recently responded to the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee (SAC)'s inquiry into the demography of Scotland and the implications for devolution. There is a degree of overlap between that report and your committee's report in respect of demographic and EU migration trends in Scotland.

As we said in our reply to SAC, the Government wants Scotland to continue to prosper, and accepts that migration from other parts of the UK and from abroad is necessary for that. People will only come to Scotland, though, if the socio-economic conditions are right and good employment opportunities are available in the first instance.

The Scottish Government has significant policy levers at its disposal to encourage more individuals and families to move to Scotland for work and ultimately to settle, such as: economic development and support for enterprise; education and workforce training; health and social care; digital connectivity and transport.

In addition the Scottish Parliament has recently taken on new tax-raising powers, which have the potential to be used to influence the working age population in Scotland in line with local priorities.

There is, therefore, a question for the Scottish Government about what, with these significant powers at their disposal, it is doing to make Scotland an attractive place to work.

The UK Government remains committed to working with the Scottish Government on specific issues and areas of common concern, to harness the resources and talent available to encourage and support people to remain, visit or settle in Scotland, and contribute to the future vitality of Scotland.

Turning to the status of EU nationals currently living in Scotland, at present, the UK remains in the EU. The Government has been clear that European Economic Area and Swiss nationals here, as well as UK nationals in other EU countries, continue to have the same rights and status, and are subject to the same residence requirements under EU law, as was the case before the referendum.

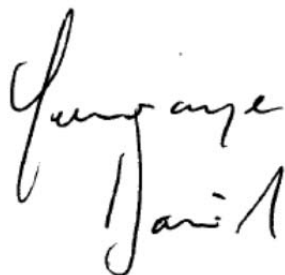
You rightly note the significant contribution that EU nationals have made to Scotland. The UK Government agrees wholeheartedly and fully recognises the invaluable contribution that EU nationals make to our economy and our society. That is why the Prime Minister has made it one of her twelve priorities to secure the status of EU nationals already living in the UK and UK citizens living elsewhere in the EU, as early as possible once formal negotiations begin.

The United Kingdom remains one of the most tolerant and welcoming places in the world, and there is no reason for this to change following the UK's exit from the EU. Both the Prime Minister's Lancaster House speech of 17 January and the subsequent White Paper, published on 2 February, made clear that we welcome the contribution migrants have made to the UK and will continue to make to our economy and society.

It is therefore surprising to see how much weight your committee appears to place on projections based on zero immigration from the EU over 10 and 25 years. As at least one of the witnesses commented, these are unrealistic. We will always want immigration, including from the EU, particularly high-skilled immigration, and we will continue to welcome individual migrants arriving lawfully in the UK. However that process must be managed properly so that our immigration system serves the national interest.

In considering the various options for a future system, we will seek to understand the impact on the different sectors of the economy and the labour market, and will therefore ensure businesses and communities have the opportunities to contribute their views. We will also work to understand the potential impacts of any proposed change in all the parts of the UK and build a comprehensive picture of the needs and interests of all parts of the UK and look to develop a system that works for all.

In this vein, as the Government forms its negotiating strategy for leaving the EU, we will work closely with the Scottish Government to get the best possible deal for all parts of our United Kingdom. We welcome the recent publication of the Scottish Government's paper *Scotland's Place in Europe*, which was discussed at the last meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU Negotiations) and is now the subject of intensified engagement between officials from the UK Government and their Scottish Government counterparts.



**The Rt Hon David Mundell MP
SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR SCOTLAND**



**Robert Goodwill MP
IMMIGRATION MINISTER**