

2020.09.08

17 The Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding European Community travel documents: (OQ.213/2020)

Will the Minister confirm what plans, if any, there are to negotiate with the U.K. Home Office to allow travellers from the European Union the continued use of European Community travel documents, rather than such travellers having to obtain a national passport in their country of origin, given the potential impact that such a requirement may have on the Island's tourism industry?

The Connétable of St. Clement (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The travel documents the Deputy refers to are the European Union national identity cards. These cards are only accepted as travel documents by E.U. (European Union) member states and, as we all know, the U.K. is no longer a member of the European Union and we are coming towards the end of the transition period of the U.K. leaving. The U.K. Government has made it clear that it is their intention to increase security at their borders. In fact this was one of the main reasons why the U.K. decided to leave the E.U. As a result, this includes no longer accepting the insecure E.U. I.D. (identification) card as travel documents. We have an obligation, as a member of the Common Travel Area, to align immigration controls to that of the United Kingdom. I do not consider it would be appropriate for the Island to request the U.K. to reconsider policy that will compromise the border security of the U.K. and indeed the whole of the Common Travel Area. Of course it is regrettable that this policy may affect some visitors who made unplanned trips to the Island but, in fairness, the policy has been well-publicised and I am aware that there are already a larger number of E.U. nationals holding national passports.

4.17.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I know it is not the Minister's responsibility to worry about tourism but is he aware of the very deep concerns that have been expressed by hoteliers and other tour operators and the hospitality trade in general by Jersey's loss of that very important day trip and market, particularly from France? Is there anything that he or his colleagues in the Council of Ministers can do to mitigate the damage this could do to an already beleaguered industry?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

As I have said, it is regrettable that this will have some impact on the day-tripper trade, in particular. But this will apply, of course, to the other members of the Common Travel Area, including the U.K. itself, who I know have been lobbied pretty hard by the hospitality industry and the travel industry in that place. Yes, of course I am aware because I have had conversations and exchanged correspondence with the main sea operator, Condor, and it is regrettable that there will be some impact. What we have also communicated regularly over the last 18 months with the Honorary Consuls, those countries that have consulates in the Island and, hopefully, as I say, there are signs, well it is more than signs it is happening, more Europeans are now getting passports.

4.17.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

There's a bit of an inconsistency in what the Minister is saying. As Ireland is part of the Common Travel Area, are they going to accept other forms of identification from Irish citizens, rather than having them take passports, as they are still part of the E.U. and will be?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Yes, the Republic of Ireland is a member of the E.U. and will be remaining as so and, as such, European nationals will be able to enter Ireland with an E.U. identity card. The United Kingdom are putting in arrangements for travel between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

That is not a full answer because the Irish Republic have access into the U.K. and they will continue to have.

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy Higgins, that was the Minister's answer to the question. There is no supplementary at this point.

4.17.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister whether he has a specific date at which the identity cards will no longer be valid and passports will be needed? Will this be publicised very clearly, particularly for residents of the Island who may have real problems?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

The date has not yet been fixed by the United Kingdom but I suspect it will be some time during the first half of next year. I do not see why this should cause problems for Jersey people, local people, because we are already required to use passports. Those with settled status will of course continue to be able to use the E.U. I.D. cards up to 2025.

4.17.4 The Deputy of St. John:

Does the Minister and his colleagues have a proposal to compensate tourism businesses in the event that visitor numbers fall significantly? Furthermore, how will the French market be affected once foreign nationals are unable to enter the Island without a passport issued in their country of origin?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Foreign nationals will continue to have access to Jersey with passports issued in their country of origin; that is not a problem. Just that simply there will come a time when they will not be able to use E.U. I.D. cards.

The Deputy of St. John:

My question was: how do you propose compensating businesses whose trade falls off because E.U. members are utilising I.D. cards and cannot come to the Island?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

No, there are no plans for compensation. But E.U. nationals cannot continue to come to the Island and other places in the Common Travel Area, including the U.K., but they will after the date has been fixed requiring a passport. We must remember the United Kingdom have decided to leave the European Union and Protocol 3 falls away with that, so the benefits that we have with the European Union will also fall away. The reason the U.K. decided to leave was to improve their border security and, as part of the Common Travel Area, we have to be part of that and I am sure Members will understand that.