Brexit? Brexisn’t yet!

AS WE write, the UK is still in the EU. The scheduled Brexit date of 29 March has come and gone. The UK government now plans to leave the EU on 31 October at the latest.

There was widespread anger when new UK passports arrived after 29 March – still in EU burgundy red, but with the words “European Union” already missing from the front cover. UK driving licences are still being issued, for the moment, with the gold-stars-on-blue EU flag in the corner.

The threat of a disorderly no-deal Brexit on or after 31 October seems, however, to be receding.

The UK not having left yet means there is almost certainly an imminent European Parliament election in the UK on 23 May – see page 2.

Our members who are EU nationals in the UK still have to complete EU Settlement Scheme formalities by 30 June 2021. See our report online of the April LFB meeting – our “Dr Brexit” session – at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1903brex.html we offer advice from leading immigration lawyer Alison Stanley to members who are EU nationals in the UK.

This includes “settled status” – for those who’ve been in the UK for five years; pre-settled status for those who haven’t yet; “continuous residence” requirements and the gaps you are allowed in this; pre-settled status for those who’ve been in the UK less than five years; bringing over family members to join you in the UK; applying for settled status via an Android phone and in person; Permanent Residence and why it’s a good idea to apply for it if you plan to later naturalise as a British citizen or if you’re a citizen of a European Economic Area country.

The later Brexit date means EU nationals now have just over six months to bring over family members so they’re resident when the UK leaves the EU.

The most problematic aspect of the EU Settlement Scheme application seems to be that it only works on Android phones – not iPhones and not Windows phones. The Mayor of London’s Office is running advice sessions around London: see www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1905sett.html for links to its EU Londoners Hub, which promises to have advice on access to phones for EU Settlement scheme applications shortly.

Our UK national members in the EU still have to fulfil the requirements to register for post-Brexit permanent residence in the EU Member State where they live – although there is no more time for the Member State governments to come up with detailed plans for this and to carry out registration. We’ve not heard of any deadlines for registration being extended as a result of the UK not leaving yet.

The end of the “transition period” after Brexit – in which it’s pretty much business as usual between the EU and the UK, including Freedom of Movement still being in place – is still 31 December 2020 for now. UK Prime Minister Theresa May has admitted that it could be extended. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, feels that this is likely.

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International Journalism Festival 2019

In April, Branch member Federica Tedeschi went to Perugia, in Italy, to attend the International Journalism Festival (IJF19). She says it’s “a global and inspiring event worth travelling for every year”.

LONG distance does not seem to be an issue, with some of the (over 650) IJF19 speakers coming from as far as Philippines and Australia. The organisers were proud to announce that 49 per cent of this year’s speakers were women.

There was the usual abundance of social media technologies events, as well as talks and panels on different aspects of human rights. The festival also focused on the far-right movements currently making gains across Europe.

Each session was live-streamed, with video available on demand on the festival website immediately afterward.

Those who haven’t been able to attend the festival in Perugia – don’t despair! You can still pick and choose among almost 300 sessions and enjoy whatever event they might like by checking on www.journalismfestival.com/programme/2019.

While in Perugia, I met one of the Festival’s directors, and I am planning to bring the LFB to the IJF20 next April, to present a project involving Afghanistan, which the branch is currently working on.

© Federica Tedeschi

• The Italian daily newspaper Repubblica mentioned www.londonfreelance.org in an April online article on the community of Italian journalists in London. Their reporter asked LFB’s Francesca Marchese for suggestions for Italian reporters who wish to work as freelancers in London. She suggested they should “improve your English, and connect with the NUJ.” See www.tinyurl.com/lfbreppublica

Press pass photo © Federica Tedeschi

Don’t parlay in other people’s misery

English PEN offers writers a guide to the ethics of attending literary festivals in dictatorships – at www.englishpen.org/campaigns/guidelines-attending-literary-festivals-and-international-events/