

# Spreading Alarm and Despondency amongst British Expats

Whilst we know that politicians are not on oath to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, they are not entitled to misinform people either recklessly or deliberately. This is particularly true for those who speak from a position of apparent experience or authority which lends weight to their views.

You would expect a lawyer and former Crown Law Officer to be aware of this responsibility. Yet Dominic Grieve, the former Attorney General and a practising barrister did not live up to this standard.

In the run-up to the election, the Guardian reported him saying that 2 million UK citizens working in the EU would become illegal immigrants overnight if Britain were to leave the EU. This is a massive untruth. People who have acquired rights of residence will still have those rights even if the EU treaties cease.

They are known as “acquired rights”, “executed rights” or “vested rights”. They are so firmly established that they have acquired the status of “customary law” which means that they stand as a fundamental principle of international law, not needing a specific treaty to confirm them. There is even a parliamentary briefing note about it, so Mr. Grieve has no excuse.

On 26 May I was surprised to see a report on RT (Russia Today) giving credence to this scare in a report about worried British expatriates living in France. Now RT is generally a far more sceptical reporter of EU affairs than the BBC but they seemed to have swallowed the British government story

hook, line and sinker. There were some very distressed people with established businesses, fearful that they would be forced to leave and preparing to put their homes on the market.

We can expect much more of this style of panic mongering from the British government as the date for the British EU referendum approaches and it was surprising that RT had unwittingly stoked up unnecessary distress for these people.

There is a perfectly feasible way for the UK to leave the political structure of the EU and retain its trading and other relationships without any significant disruption. You can read it [here](#) and can listen to a half hour introduction [it here](#)

Photo by James O’Gorman 