

# The tribulations of Brexiteers abroad

One of my abiding memories of the final week of June 2016 is how quickly life returned to normal after the referendum vote. If you were not a political “anorak”, in many parts of the country, interest in Brexit rapidly tailed off and the twists and turns of the subsequent 18 months, along with the complexity of the process of disentangling ourselves from the EU, have caused many ordinary people to switch off. Not many people have changed their minds since June 2016 and whichever way they voted, most ordinary people just want the government to get on with Brexit.

Spare a thought for our Brexit-supporting friends on the Continent who are still getting a lot of stick for their decision to support our independence from Brussels.

One French-based leave voter said “any attempt to talk about [Brexit] let loose a rabid mob of Brits who were personally insulting, vicious and derogatory towards me, even down to rummaging through my Facebook profile to try and dig up any dirt on me” while another said “I am reluctant to expose myself to further abuse....The passion which has been displayed by remainers has been surprisingly fierce.”

Obviously, the uncertainties surrounding the status of our expats abroad has done nothing to ease tensions within the expat community. Dominic Grieve did not help when, in 2015, he mistakenly claimed that Expats would acquire the status of illegal immigrants if we voted for Brexit. However, the vitriol expressed towards Brexit-supporting Brits in France appears to be on a scale quite alien to most of us in the UK – apart from perhaps in parts of London or in some universities.

However, there is another side to this story – the native

French who are actually quite envious of us. One retiree said, "At a recent lunch with eight French friends, all professionals, all eight backed Britain leaving the EU and were hoping for Frexit, stating the EU and the strong euro had done nothing to help the French economy."

We can be in no doubt that ripples from the Brexit vote will continue to reverberate around both the UK and many of the EU member states, but sentiment among Brexit-supporting expats is as solid as among those who are living in the UK. Robert Hodge, who lives in the Vendée speaks for many of us on both sides of the channel:- "Many leave voters are a bit concerned about the personal impact that Brexit may have on themselves, but overall, especially when they consider the future of their younger relatives in the UK, they feel that Brexit is a good thing."

Amen to that!

Photo by nathanh100 