

News story: Baroness Anelay's speech at the Polish Social and Cultural Association

I am delighted to be able to speak to you briefly, after what I understand has been an extremely productive day.

As the Minister of State for the Department for Exiting the EU, I spend a lot of time travelling and speaking to Governments about the negotiations, so I value highly the opportunity to speak directly to members of our Polish community at an event such as this.

First, I'd like to thank the Polish Social and Cultural Association for hosting the event today and for what I hope will be the beginning of an ongoing partnership to bring together the British Government with the Polish community. Secondly, thank you to all of you who have taken the time to attend today's event.

The very objective of today is to bring you, the Polish community's leaders and representatives, together with Government to discuss the issues that matter most to you.

I know that many of you will be concerned about what Brexit means for your future in the UK. I hope that the Prime Minister's speech in Florence last month offered some reassurance.

In no uncertain terms she stated to all EU citizens who have made their lives in our country – that we want you to stay; we value you; and we thank you for your contribution to our national life.

You in this room – as members of the one million strong Polish community in the UK – are incredibly valued members of our communities. You make a significant contribution to Britain's economic, cultural and social life.

Polish entrepreneurs have set up approximately 30,000 companies in the UK. There are about 6,000 Polish students studying at our universities.

And centres like this one help bring communities together, build bridges and understanding, and make Britain the inclusive and diverse society it is. So I want to stress, as our Home Secretary Amber Rudd said just last week during a visit to Warsaw, you are an important part of our community and we very much want Poles to continue staying in Britain.

We recognise the uncertainty that the referendum result has caused. But we want to make sure that everyone here is welcome – and that you're able to carry on living your lives as before.

I hope that today's event, as well as the British Embassy's ongoing work with Polish Diaspora in the UK, goes some way to demonstrate that commitment.

Let me stress – the guarantee we are giving on your rights is real. We have also committed to incorporating our agreement fully into UK law and make sure the UK courts can refer directly to it.

We are determined to get on with the job and deliver certainty to people as soon as possible. Both parties in negotiations want to achieve the best possible outcome and the strongest possible partnership – one that works for the UK and for the EU.

As we set out in more detail earlier today, the negotiations in Brussels have been constructive and we are encouraged at the progress made on the following main issues:

- Significant progress has been made on citizens' rights. Around two-thirds of the outstanding issues have now been resolved.
- We have made good progress on Ireland, including on respecting the Belfast Agreement and maintaining the Common Travel Area.
- And we have also reached agreement on a host of lower-profile separation issues.

As you will have read in the papers, the financial settlement is a key aspect of the negotiations for Member States – we are working with our partners across Europe to give them the certainty they need.

It's clear that there is further to go but, thanks to the constructive and determined manner with which both sides have conducted these negotiations we are making decisive steps forward. We are confident that we can resolve the outstanding issues.

Even while we're leaving the EU, we want to continue to deepen the strong relationship we already have with Poland, after decades of cooperation.

Britain's relationship with Poland has gone from strength to strength. Next month, Sir Alan Duncan will host a reception launching the new Belvedere Civil Society Forum in the UK. This forum will bring our civil societies together – business, universities, think tanks, parliaments, media and cultural institutions – to swap ideas, make new connections and contacts.

And the Prime Minister will travel to Poland in December to the second Inter-Governmental Consultations, where we will look to strengthen our comprehensive programme of collaboration in defence, foreign policy, security, the economy and business, science and innovation.

Poland is the first country the UK has met in this format. Last year, we agreed a set of actions that have enhanced the UK-Poland relationship.

British troops are now in Poland, and we have increased our cooperation to tackle modern slavery and organised crime.

This year, we will continue to deepen and broaden our relationship by agreeing a new set of actions.

We want to continue working together to face our shared security threats, for

instance. We are unconditionally and completely committed to maintaining Europe's security. That is why we are proposing a new security treaty between the UK and the EU.

This would be part of a strategic agreement that provides a comprehensive framework for future security, law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation. And it would complement the extensive and mature relationships that we already have with European friends to promote our common security.

I know that many of you will be concerned about what Brexit means for these relationships in future. But when we leave the EU we will not leave. We want to continue to be close friends, committed trading partners and unwavering allies to the EU even after we have left.

So I hope that you leave today more informed by the steps we're taking to secure your future. I also hope that, as community leaders, you leave today feeling more empowered and able to share this information with your friends and relatives in the Polish community.

Reassuring and informing, however, will be a shared endeavour. That's why we plan to run more events such as this with Polish diaspora across the country – we're looking at continuing the programme in Edinburgh and the Midlands.

We would therefore be very interested in your feedback in how today went and want to hear from those of you who would like to be involved in future events.

Please do get in touch with my department, or speak to the officials here, to share your thoughts. Thank you.