**Anthea McIntyre,** *on behalf of the ECR Group***.** – Madam President, Britain has a long and celebrated history of immigration, a proud record of welcoming people from inside the EU and from across the world, and this will continue long after Brexit. Immigration has made our country stronger, richer and more tolerant. The Prime Minister was very clear about the value she places on the contribution of EU citizens to Britain, to its economy, its society and its culture. That is why securing the status of EU nationals residing in the UK, and of UK nationals residing in the EU, is a top priority for the Prime Minister. Any delay in reaching guarantees on this issue is a consequence of timing and procedure, not of political will.

Why are we not now debating how we can make freedom of movement work better? Why are we not debating how we can rebuild people’s confidence in the principle? Why are we not debating how we can address the concerns regarding its implementation across the whole of Europe? For example, we could be addressing the concerns in Germany about access to public services and benefits. We could be addressing the demographic challenges that many EU countries face.

Our debates do nothing to convince people that we have solutions to the challenges we face – and then we wonder why voters are turning to the fringes of our political system for answers. Debates like this just fuel the scaremongers and spread fear amongst our citizens, who are already unsettled by the changing political landscape. We are missing an opportunity to strengthen our goal of a better Europe, and I am afraid that political point scoring ahead of the triggering of Article 50 will only weaken this House and its credibility.

*(The speaker agreed to take a blue-card question under Rule 162(8))*