

2017

Reactions to and Anticipated Consequences of Brexit for UK Older People with Second Homes in Spain

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Recommended Citation

Sedgley, Diane; Haven-Tang, Claire L. Dr; and Cockburn-Wooten, Cheryl (2017) "Reactions to and Anticipated Consequences of Brexit for UK Older People with Second Homes in Spain," *Critical Tourism Studies Proceedings*: Vol. 2017 , Article 22.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.library.tru.ca/cts-proceedings/vol2017/iss1/22>

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Title: Reactions to and Anticipated Consequences of Brexit for UK Older People with Second Homes in Spain

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Session Type: Presentation

Abstract:

Inter-European migration and second home ownership, particularly for middle-class retirees, has become a well-documented phenomenon (Hall, 2014). This movement has predominantly been from North to South, as migrants seek a lower cost of living, a warmer climate, and opportunities to engage in social pursuits. Many individuals may visit temporarily, staying for a couple of weeks or an extended period during the year, while others will decide to reside permanently, while they are still independently mobile, before perhaps considering returning in their later ‘frail’ years to their families (Gustafson, 2001, 2002, 2008).

Against this backdrop, it is therefore of little surprise that, of the 1.3 million UK citizens living and working in Europe, Spain is the most popular country for UK expatriates and those with second homes overseas. Migration Watch UK (2016) has identified that there are now 309,000 British people living in Spain. However, following the recent Brexit referendum vote, British expatriates and second home owners are facing a future of uncertainty. Under the Treaty of the European Union (EU), Britain has two years after triggering Article 50 to negotiate a new agreement with EU member states, including arrangements for freedom of movement, residency, and access to healthcare.

Many of the expatriates and second home owners in Spain are older people who are facing uncertainty over their future. This paper presents the findings of research which explored the reactions and intentions of a sample of UK older people with second homes in Spain to the Brexit decision. At the same time, the paper analyses how these intentions have potential economic and social consequences for Spain’s economy and society, as well as considering how the concerns of UK retirees might be addressed as the UK negotiates its exit from the EU.

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