

News story: More detail provided on new settled status for EU citizens

The Government has today offered further reassurance for EU citizens and their family members by setting out further details of how its new settled status scheme will operate.

Those applying to stay in the UK after we leave the EU will not have their applications refused on minor technicalities and caseworkers considering applications will exercise discretion where appropriate. We expect the majority of cases to be granted.

EU citizens will also be given a statutory right of appeal, in line with their current rights through the Free Movement Directive, if their application is unsuccessful.

In a [technical document](#) sent to the European Commission as part of negotiations, the government reiterates how the new system will be streamlined, low-cost and user-friendly, with EU citizens consulted on its design.

The Prime Minister has been clear that safeguarding the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and UK nationals in Europe is the first priority for negotiations and she said last month that an agreement is within touching distance. Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, David Davis said:

We have been clear that safeguarding the rights of EU citizens is our top priority in our negotiations. They make a huge contribution to our economy and society and we do not want to see that change as a result of our decision to leave the EU.

We will support everyone wishing to stay to gain settled status through a new straightforward, streamlined system.

The last negotiation round saw real progress in this area and I believe the document we have published today can facilitate the deal we need to guarantee the rights of UK citizens living in the EU27, and vice versa.

The document commits to:

- giving EU citizens plenty of time to apply, with a 2-year grace period after we leave the EU to make an application for settled status
- minimising the documentary evidence that applicants need to provide and enabling caseworkers to contact applicants to resolve minor issues
- keeping the cost of an application to no more than that of a British passport
- giving EU citizens a statutory right of appeal, in line with their

current rights through the Free Movement Directive, if their application is unsuccessful

- making decisions solely on the criteria set out in the Withdrawal Agreement, with no discretion for other reasons for refusal
- introducing a digital, streamlined and user friendly application system
- not requiring EU citizens to have held comprehensive sickness insurance or to provide fingerprints
- a simpler, lower cost process for those who already have permanent residence documentation

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

I have been clear that EU citizens living in the UK make an enormous contribution to our country and we want them to stay.

Applying for settled status will be a streamlined, low-cost, digital process and EU citizens are being consulted on its design to ensure it is user-friendly.

We know that there is some anxiety among EU citizens about how the process of applying for settled status will work so I hope this document provides some further reassurance.

The document also sets out that applicants will be asked to declare any criminal convictions and be checked against UK security databases. This is a reasonable measure to keep the country safe from those who have abused our hospitality by committing serious crimes.

Press release: Love birds postpone Ouse Bridge inspection

Inspections are carried out on the bridge every two years but on discovering the pair of protected birds Highways England called in experts.

The nesting periods for birds vary from species to species and RSPB were able to offer the necessary advice about the peregrine pair.

Female peregrine.

The latest inspection was due to be carried out in October however engineers have waited until the peregrine chicks have left the nest before carrying out their regular bridge inspection.

Male peregrine.

Highways England service delivery team leader for Yorkshire and Humber, Mark Ramsden, said:

We have worked with the RSPB to make sure we do everything we can to not upset the chicks and their parents. We have now been able to schedule our work outside of fledgling period and hope that the pair will produce chicks for many years to come.

During peak times up to 23,000 drivers use the bridge each day and this is just part of the activity that goes on behind the scenes on this major Yorkshire landmark.

To carry out the inspections engineers need to be within touching distance of the bridge. They use a specialist underbridge unit which parks on the hard shoulder of the bridge and deploys a hanging walkway under the bridge and lowers workers beneath the structure.

Diving inspections are also carried out to assess the underwater condition of the bridge structure. Ouse Bridge was opened in 1976 and was the last section of the main part of the M62 which stretches east to west from Liverpool to Hull.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Call for evidence on how to reduce the cost of energy launched](#)

Groups are being called upon to submit their views on how the cost of energy can be cut, following the publication of Professor Dieter Helm CBE's review

A call for evidence on reducing the cost of energy has been launched by the government today, following the independent review by Professor Dieter Helm CBE.

On 25 October, Professor Helm concluded his independent review which outlines recommendations on how to reduce costs in the power system, whilst ensuring the UK meets its climate change targets.

Building on the government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper, Professor Helm was asked to consider the whole electricity supply chain of generation, transmission, distribution and supply, and recommend how to reduce costs in each part.

The Government [is now calling on industry, businesses and consumer groups to give their opinions](#) on Professor Helm's recommendations to government.

Business and Energy Secretary Greg Clark said:

Energy bills are too high for consumers. We have been clear that we are committed to bringing down costs, both for households and for businesses.

I commissioned this review to start a debate about the future of our energy markets. Now I am opening up that debate, asking everyone with an interest to give us their views on Professor Helm's ideas for bringing down the cost of energy for consumers.

Any stakeholders who would like to comment on the findings should email their submissions to costofenergy@beis.gov.uk by 5 January 2018.

[Press release: Minister for Europe visits Albania and Kosovo](#)

During his first official visits to Albania and Kosovo, the Minister will meet senior government representatives, entrepreneurs, journalists and future leaders to reaffirm the UK's commitment to the Western Balkans and to discuss preparations for the UK-hosted 2018 Western Balkans Summit.

In Tirana, Albania, the Minister will hold discussions with Prime Minister Edi Rama, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati, Interior Minister Fatmir Xhafaj and Justice Minister Etilda Gjonaj. He will discuss the UK cooperation on judicial reform, the fight against organised crime and tackling corruption.

With Interior Minister Xhafaj, the Minister will attend the launch of Albania's Strategic Plan to tackle Organised Crime Strategy. Sir Alan will also meet Chevening Scholars and young entrepreneurs

In Pristina, Kosovo, the Minister will meet President Thaci, Prime Minister Haradinaj, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Communities and Return, and the Ministers of Justice and Internal Affairs to discuss UK support for the rule of law in Kosovo.

The Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

My first official visits to Albania and Kosovo come at an important time, as we continue to work with our partners in the region on reform and progress.

In Albania the UK is working to help judicial reform and the fight against organised crime and corruption, as well as the country's EU membership aspirations.

The UK has a special relationship with Kosovo. We were the first country to recognise its independence, and we remain committed to supporting Kosovo's progress and working together on rule of law. We have a joint interest in seeing Kosovo develop into a prosperous country that is a source of stability in the region.

Further information

[News story: OTS's first review of VAT triggers debate](#)

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) report, published today, offers a range of proposals for simplifying the tax.

This first [report on VAT](#) from the OTS contains 23 recommendations for simplifying the tax. Its lead recommendation on the future level and design of the VAT threshold is already prompting debate.

The 8 core recommendations are:

- the government should examine the current approach to the level and design of the VAT registration threshold, with a view to setting out a future direction of travel for the threshold, including consideration of the potential benefits of a smoothing mechanism
- HMRC should maintain a programme for further improving the clarity of its guidance and its responsiveness to requests for rulings in areas of uncertainty
- HMRC should consider ways of reducing the uncertainty and administrative costs for business relating to potential penalties when inaccuracies are

voluntarily disclosed

- HM Treasury and HMRC should undertake a comprehensive review of the reduced rate, zero-rate and exemption schedules, working with the support of the OTS
- The government should consider increasing the partial exemption de minimis limits in line with inflation, and explore alternative ways of removing the need for businesses incurring insignificant amounts of input tax to carry out partial exemption calculations
- HMRC should consider further ways to simplify partial exemption calculations and to improve the process of making and agreeing special method applications
- the government should consider whether capital goods scheme categories other than for land and property are needed, and review the land and property threshold
- HMRC should review the current requirements for record keeping and the audit trail for options to tax, and the extent to which this might be handled on-line.

To help illustrate some of the issues highlighted by the report, both generally and for small business, the OTS has published two pictograms today.

PDF, 540KB, 1 page

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A [press release](#) about the report was published on Friday.