



Home Office

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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Chair
Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Yvette,

11 OCT 2018

EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME

I am writing to provide the Committee with an update on the phased implementation of the EU Settlement Scheme for resident EU citizens and their family members to obtain UK immigration status.

The Immigration Rules for the scheme, set out in Appendix EU, came into force on 28 August 2018, for the purposes of an initial private beta test phase, involving, on a voluntary basis, the staff of 12 NHS Trusts and the staff and students of three universities in north-west England. This phase has allowed us successfully to test some of the functionality of the online application process for the EU Settlement Scheme in a live environment and to obtain valuable feedback from applicants on their experience of the process.

It has been a deliberately small, controlled test phase, allowing us to build incrementally as we learn from processing the first applications under the scheme. From 28 August to 8 October 2018, we received more than 650 applications and we currently expect this to reach around 1,000 by the end of this initial private beta phase later this month.

We originally estimated that there might potentially be up to 4,000 EU citizens eligible to apply as part of the initial cohort, but participation in the pilot is entirely voluntary and our communications strategy has balanced clear information about the scope for relevant EU citizens to apply during the pilot phase with reassurance that there will be plenty of time – until 30 June 2021, in line with the draft Withdrawal Agreement – for all resident EU citizens to apply for status under the scheme.

We will publish a report on this initial private beta phase as we move into a second private beta phase in November and I will write again to the Committee to provide a copy of this, but the early indications have been positive:

- Feedback from applicants on the speed and ease of the application process has been very positive – around 95 per cent of applicants who provided customer feedback found the application process easy to complete, taking on average 15-20 minutes. And over 90 per cent said that the information provided in advance helped them to feel reassured about and better prepared to complete the application process.
- All the applicants whose cases have been processed so far have been granted the leave they were expecting to be granted, with around two thirds obtaining settled status, one third pre-settled status and none refused.
- The technology has performed well, with a high proportion of applicants able to establish their UK residence based on the automated checks made against HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) data and without having to provide any additional evidence.
- We have also tested the ‘EU Exit: ID Document Check’ app for checking the applicant’s passport and confirming their identity remotely, with most applicants saying that they would use this once more widely available.

We have also learned lessons from this initial private beta phase, which have enabled us to make technical changes to improve the overall customer experience. These include improvements to:

- Our data matching capability, to enable more applicants to be matched automatically to HMRC data and in due course Department for Work and Pensions data also.
- Terminology in the application process to aid understanding.
- The process for verifying the applicant’s email address.

The initial private beta phase has enabled us successfully to test components of the online application process. We now need to test that online process as an integrated, end-to-end process, as this will be the means by which the great majority of resident EU citizens and their family members will make their applications under the scheme.

We are therefore moving ahead with a second private beta phase, which, as set out in the Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules (HC 1534) which the Home Secretary has laid before Parliament today, will run from 1 November to 21 December 2018.

As well as testing the full end-to-end online application process, this second private beta phase will also significantly scale up the testing, including, on a voluntary basis and with the agreement of the Devolved Administrations, staff in the higher education, health and social care sectors across the UK. This phase will also include some vulnerable individuals being supported by a small number of local authorities and civil society organisations so that we can test the operation of the scheme for those with support needs. I am grateful to all the organisations and their staff taking part in the testing and thereby helping us to establish the EU Settlement Scheme as effectively as possible.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Library.

Yours ever
Caroline

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Minister of State for Immigration