



State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, in charge of the National Lottery, attached to the Minister of the Interior, Institutional Reform and Democratic Renewal

Dear United Kingdom nationals living in Belgium,
Dear family members of United Kingdom nationals,

On 31st January 2020, the United Kingdom left the European Union. A transition period followed, lasting until 31st December 2020 during which time, freedom of movement continued to apply. As we approach the end of this transition period, I, as the Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, wish to inform you of your rights under the Withdrawal Agreement and the procedure to follow in order to safeguard them.

The Withdrawal Agreement protects the right of residence for UK nationals living in Belgium before the end of the transition period, and their family members. It also protects the exit and entry rights of UK frontier workers working in Belgium before the end of the transition period.

In order to continue benefitting from these rights, **all UK nationals and their family members will have to apply for one of the new statuses for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement at their commune where they reside or usually work.** For those already in possession of a valid residence document (annexe 8/8bis/E/E+/F/F+ card) or document for local border traffic (annexe 15), the procedure to follow has been kept very light. For those who do not yet have a valid residence document, the procedure to follow is almost identical to the one applicable to EU citizens. Please refer to our website (<https://dofi.ibz.be>) for more detailed information on the procedures.

If your application for a new residence card is successful, you will be issued a new electronic residence card (M card) for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement. If your application as a frontier worker is successful, you will be issued a new electronic card for local border traffic (N card) for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Belgium has opted for an extended application period lasting until 31st December 2021 in order to make sure you have sufficient time to submit your application. During this period, the rights of UK nationals living in Belgium before the end of the transition period, and their family members, are protected.

We strongly recommend that you apply as soon as possible in order to protect your rights for the future and ensure as smooth a transition as possible. You can apply for your new card from 1st of January 2021 until the 31 of December 2021. I will inform every commune of the process.

The new residence document

If you have a residence right, you will receive a residence card for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement (M card). This card has a validity of 5 years, after which you can renew your card or apply for a permanent residence right.

If you have a permanent residence right, you will receive a residence card for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement (M card) which will mention your permanent residence right. This card has a validity of 10 years, after which you can renew your card.

As a UK national or a family member with a residence right for beneficiaries of the withdrawal agreement, you can still apply for a permanent residence right at a later stage, as soon as you meet the conditions.

The new document for local border traffic

If you have a status as a frontier worker, you will receive a card for local border traffic as beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement (N card). This card has a validity of 5 years, after which you can renew your card.

Interim documentation

When applying for the new residence status, you will be given a certificate of application covering all your residence rights until a decision has been taken.

Until 31st March 2022, you can also continue to use your former valid residence document (E/E+/F/F+) in Belgium pending the submission of your application and a decision in Belgium. These former residence documents will be proof that you are protected under the Withdrawal Agreement during the application period, but they do not cover any rights reserved to EU citizens. After 31st March 2022, all former residence documents will automatically lose their validity but you can continue to use the certificate of application for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement until a decision has been taken.

Once a positive decision has been taken, your commune will issue you the new residence card for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement (M card).

Travelling outside of Belgium

In order to prove your status as beneficiary of the Withdrawal Agreement at the border, you will need to present both a valid ID and either the certificate of application or your valid electronic card for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement (M/N card).

During the application period, which lasts until 31st December 2021, you can also use your former residence document (annexe 8, 8bis, E, E+, F, F+ card) at the border to prove that you are protected by the Withdrawal Agreement. After 31st December 2021, only the certificate of application or the new electronic cards for beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement (M/N card) will be accepted at the border.

You will have to use the “ALL PASSPORTS” lane when travelling but on presenting the above mentioned documents, you will enjoy the same entry and exit rights as before.

Work

Under the Withdrawal Agreement, you have unlimited access to the Belgian labour market. The certificate of application you receive when applying for a new status and the new electronic cards (M/N card) will specify this. It is automatic: you do not need to take any additional steps to continue working in Belgium.

We strongly recommend that you regularly visit our website (<https://dofi.ibz.be>) for more detailed information on the criteria, procedure and documents to submit. On our website, click on the 'Brexit' section where you will find the latest news. This section is available in French, Dutch and English and is updated as soon as new information becomes available. You will also find up to date information on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-belgium>.



Sammy Mahdi
State Secretary for Asylum and Migration