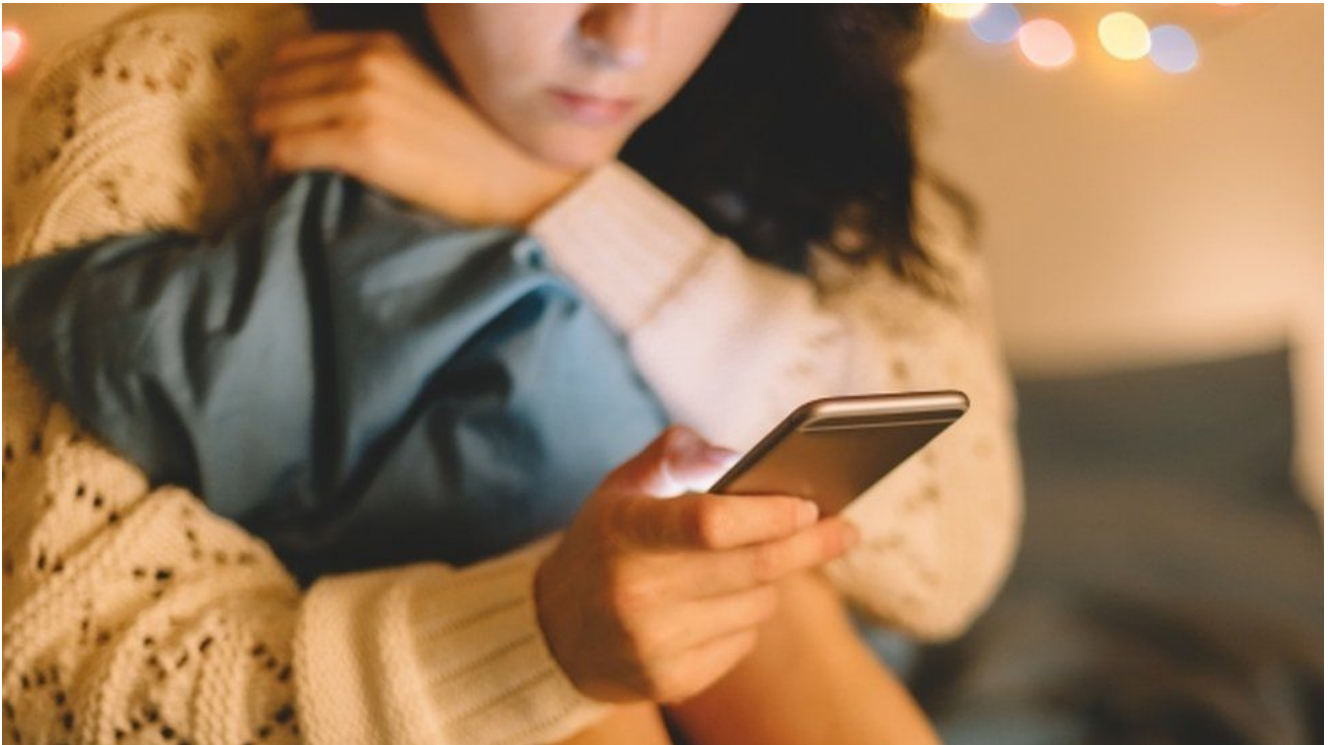


Half a million EU citizens await decision over right to stay in UK



More than half a million EU citizens are still awaiting a decision over UK settled status after a surge of applications before the June deadline - Getty Images

Some 569,100 cases were pending in July, Home Office data shows.

Lawyers have warned that delays can last weeks, leaving some EU nationals unable to work or rent.

The Home Office says it has deployed extra resources to deal with applications and most non-complex cases are decided within five working days.

After Brexit, the automatic right for EU citizens and their families to live and work in the UK ended.

Instead, EU citizens had to apply for legal permission to remain under what is known as the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

A total of 6,015,400 applications were made between the launch of the scheme in March 2019 and the closing date of 30 June 2021.

Another 58,200 applications came in after the deadline, figures up to 31 July show.

Poland was the nation with the highest number of applications at 1,091,500, followed by Romania with 1,067,200 and Italy with 545,600.

What is settled status?

EU nationals living in the UK were given until 30 June to apply to stay in the UK.

They could apply for:

- Settled status - on offer to anyone who can prove that they had been in the UK continuously for five years or more before 31 December 2020. As of 31 May, it has been granted to 2.75 million people.
- Pre-settled status - on offer to anyone who had been in the UK for less than five years by the end of 2020. As of 31 May, it has been granted to 2.28 million. They can apply for settled status in future, but there is no guarantee they will get it.

Following a surge in applications ahead of the 30 June deadline, the government increased the number of caseworkers and resolution agents to respond to queries.

However, Bhavneeta Limbachia, an immigration lawyer at Russell-Cooke solicitors, has warned of delays in issuing EU citizens with a Certificate of Application.

This is the document required to demonstrate an individual still has the right to live and work in the UK.

“This bottleneck in the system is failing EU nationals, especially when employment has had to be temporarily suspended,” she said.

“The delay is also prejudicial to landlords and employers, who are left in a

predicament when assessing whether an applicant is legally permitted to continue renting or working in the UK.”

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Immigration minister Kevin Foster said anyone who makes a late application will receive temporary protection until it is concluded.

“I’m delighted thousands more EU citizens have had their status secured through our hugely successful EU Settlement Scheme and we continue to work as quickly as possible to conclude all applications received,” Mr. Foster said.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-58188657>

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