

Brexit - What now for EU nationals in the UK?

The UK's vote to leave the EU has no immediate impact on free movement rights in the UK. However, businesses should begin to identify key workers that rely on UK membership of the EU to work here. Individuals, who are eligible, may wish to consider applying for permanent residence or British citizenship while the UK works out the terms of its exit.

The impact of leaving the EU

As notice to leave the EU has not yet been given, the UK is currently still a member of the EU. There are no immediate changes with regards to free movement.

- EU law still applies. Accordingly, EU citizens already in the UK will continue to have free movement rights until the UK formally leaves the EU.
- The long term impact on EU citizens' rights to travel to, live and work in the UK will depend on the nature of any future relationship between the UK and EU/European Economic Area (EEA).
- Due to the disruption and administrative burden that retrospective changes could cause, it is likely that grandfathering arrangements will be applied to preserve the position of EU citizens that are already exercising their free movement rights in the UK.

Practical steps to take now

Applications for Permanent Residency under the EEA Regulations 2006, for British Citizenship and updates to sponsor licences may take months to process. Therefore, it would be prudent to take practical steps now to prepare before the UK leaving the EU.

- For EEA nationals and/or their family members that are currently in the UK and qualify for permanent residence may wish to submit an application to the Home Office for a document certifying permanent residence or a permanent residence card.
- Provided they meet the eligibility criteria, EEA nationals who have held permanent residence for one year may wish to apply to naturalise as a British citizen as a

Key points

- The UK is currently still a member of the EU, nothing has changed yet
- EEA nationals and/or their family members that have been in the UK for five years may wish to apply for permanent residency provided they meet all other criteria.

precautionary measure. Applicants should check before applying whether British citizenship would have any implications on their current nationality as some countries do not permit their nationals to obtain citizenship of other countries.

- From a practical perspective, employers should undertake an audit of their domestic workplace to identify which workers (or key workers) rely on the UK's membership to the EU to work in the UK to assess possible areas of vulnerability.

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