



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Chair
Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

1st November 2018

Dear Yvette

EU Settlement Scheme

Further to my letter of 11 October, I am writing to provide you with an update on 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 (PB1), 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 to successfully 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.

My letter of 11 October 2018 set out some interim findings from PB1 and I placed a copy of that letter in the House Library. Yesterday I published a report of that phase, a copy of which I enclose. This can also be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-private-beta-1>. I will arrange for a copy of this letter and the PB1 report to be placed in the House Library.

In general, PB1 has been successful, with very positive customer feedback on the speed and ease of the application process. The technology has performed well, with minor changes needed to help improve overall customer experience and our ability to automatically match applicants to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) data as evidence of residence. The experience of caseworkers has also been positive. Lessons learned in relation to the communications material to help applicants prepare for and complete the application process will remain under review, but the findings were encouraging.

Some key findings include:

- 1053 applications were received, with a decision in 924 cases being despatched by 30 October.
- the average time taken on all decisions was just under nine calendar days, with the fastest decision being made within three days.
- all applicants successfully proved their identity.

- in all decided cases, all applicants have been granted the status they expected to receive, with around two thirds being granted settled status, one third granted pre-settled status and none refused.
- over 94% of applicants who provided customer feedback agreed (strongly or moderately) that the application process was easy to complete. A further 3.5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

PB1 was deliberately designed to be relatively modest in scale and applicants are participating in the test phases on a purely voluntary basis. However, the volume of cases has provided sufficient scale of insight to inform the next phase of private beta testing (PB2). In light of the PB1 experience we have made a number of changes to the application process and the information that we provide to applicants. These include:

- minor changes to the application process to help improve the overall customer experience.
- improvements to our ability to automatically match applicants to HMRC data as evidence of residence.
- simplifying some of the terminology used to aid understanding.
- improving the process for verifying the applicant's email address.

The Immigration Rules for PB2 were laid on 11 October 2018. PB2 will test the integration of the various application components, for example the identity verification app will be integrated into the online application process. It will also test additional elements, including the Settlement Resolution Centre (which will provide support for applicants) and the process for administrative review of decisions made under the scheme.

The second phase will run from 1 November to 21 December 2018 and will test the full online application process. The number of participating organisations will increase significantly, to include staff in the higher education, health and social care sectors across the UK. Vulnerable people with additional support needs are also going to be included in this phase, with the involvement of a small number of local authorities and community organisations.

A full report on the second private beta phase will be published once the pilot has been completed.

I shall shortly be inviting all MPs to attend a drop-in session with officials from the Home Office, to provide them with the opportunity to hear more about the EU Settlement Scheme and the private beta phases.

I will write to you shortly to respond to your questions raised at my recent Home Affairs Select Committee appearance on Brexit and Borders Preparedness.

Yours ever
Caroline

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Minister of State for Immigration