



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP  
Chair Home Affairs Select Committee  
House of Commons  
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[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

20<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Dear Yvette,

## **EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME**

Further to my letter of 1 November, I am writing to provide the Committee with a further update on the phased implementation of the EU Settlement Scheme for resident EU citizens and their family members to obtain UK immigration status.

As you know, 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 12 NHS Trusts and three universities in north-west England. This successfully proved some key elements of the scheme in a live environment, and my letter of 1 November enclosed a report on its findings.

A second, expanded private beta phase began from 1 November 2018 and will end on 21 December 2018. This has tested the online application process as an integrated, end-to-end process. It has been available, on a voluntary basis, to staff in the higher education, health and social care sectors across the UK, and to some vulnerable individuals, being supported by a small number of local authorities and community groups, in order to test the operation of the scheme for those with support needs. This second phase has also tested additional elements of the EU Settlement Scheme, including the Settlement Resolution Centre which provides support for applicants.

A full report on the second private beta phase will be published in January 2019. However, the initial findings from this phase have been positive.

By 13 December 2018, more than 15,500 applications had been made and more than 12,400 of these had been concluded, enabling the new system and applicant interaction with it to be tested at scale. 71 per cent of the concluded applications were granted settled status, with the rest granted pre-settled status, and many received their decision within 24 hours. 77 per cent of applicants who provided feedback said that they found the online application process easy (39 per cent) or fairly easy (38 per cent) to complete. More than 90 per cent of applicants successfully used the identity verification app to prove their identity remotely, with the rest required to submit their identity document by post.

We have also learned lessons from this second private beta phase which have enabled further improvements to be made. These include improved functionality in respect of how an applicant verifies their email address; an increase in the size of files an applicant can upload, should they need to provide supporting evidence; and updates to the caseworking system. By 13 December 2018, the Settlement Resolution Centre (which is open from 8am to 8pm on weekdays and from 9-30am to 4-30pm at the weekend, to provide information and assistance in relation to the scheme) had received more than 5,020 telephone calls and more than 2,030 emails from those making an application or considering whether to do so, and feedback gathered from its work has been used widely to inform further improvements, including in the guidance available to applicants.

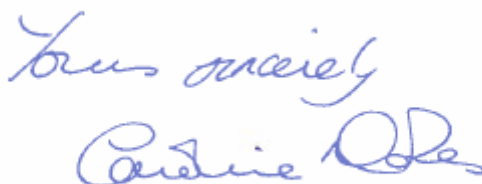
In light of the successful testing of the online application process during the private beta phases, we have decided to proceed, as planned, with the start of the wider public implementation of the EU Settlement Scheme from 21 January 2019, and the Immigration Rules changes required to enable this have been laid before Parliament. From that date, the scheme will be available to resident EU citizens (and their EU citizen family members) with a valid passport, and to their non-EU citizen family members holding a valid biometric residence card.

This requirement for a particular identity document reflects the fact that, during this phase of the scheme's implementation, the applicant will be required to prove their identity and nationality remotely by using that document with the identity verification app, which is an integrated part of the online application process. The applicant will be able to submit this document by post to be checked by the Home Office and returned to them, if the digital app is unable to read the relevant information in its biometric chip because that is damaged or defective. In this phase, an EU citizen will not be able, for technical reasons, to use a biometric national identity card to prove their identity and nationality remotely by using that document with the identity verification app, but they will be able to do so once the scheme is fully open.

We currently anticipate that the further implementation of the EU Settlement Scheme will be secured through further Immigration Rules changes to be laid before Parliament in early March 2019, so that the scheme will be fully open by 30 March 2019. This will include scope for applicants to prove their identity and nationality by other means, including by submitting their identity document by post to be checked by the Home Office and returned to them.

I will write to you again in January with a copy of the report on the second private beta phase when this is published.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Caroline Nokes'.

**Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP**  
**Minister of State for Immigration**