



## Open letter to local councils

An estimated 3.6 million EU citizens are living in the UK. Many live in your local area and they deserve to be informed about their rights and represented at the local level.

*the3million* is a grassroots organisation representing non-UK EU citizens, campaigning to secure our rights and be fully part of the society we live in. We are asking local councils to:

### **1. Inform EU citizens about the need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) before the deadline**

EU (and EEA)<sup>1</sup> citizens and their family members who wish to stay in the UK after Brexit must apply to the EU Settlement scheme before 30 June 2021. If they do not secure settled or pre-settled status before the deadline, they will be unlawfully residing in the UK and risk losing their jobs, homes and access to council services - preventing them from contributing to the local economy and community.

A recent survey of 3,171 EU citizens across the UK showed that overall in the UK local councils only played a small role in informing EU citizens about their rights - *less than 1%* surveyed found out about the EU Settlement Scheme through their local council.

While the scheme works well for some EU citizens, there are still a number of pressing issues to be addressed. The same survey showed that 9 in 10 EU citizens are concerned about the lack of physical proof of status. *the3million*, the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) are calling for physical proof of settled status to avoid discrimination and offer EU citizens certainty.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence has also shown that some EU citizens think they do not have to apply even when they have no existing status. This is extremely concerning and highlights the need for an automatic guarantee of status for EU citizens followed by registration to prove status, but also increased support and outreach at the local level - particularly for hard to reach communities.

*The Government urgently needs to make funding available for local councils to offer more outreach and wider community integration support.*

### **2. Inform EU citizens about their right to vote in the May 2020 local elections**

EU citizens have been able to vote in local elections in the UK. It has been confirmed this will still be the case in the May 2020 elections. However, voting rights beyond May 2020 are not linked with EU citizens' status through the EU Settlement Scheme and are currently being negotiated bilaterally. There is confusion amongst some EU citizen communities regarding their right to vote in the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/eu-eea>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.landlordnews.co.uk/eu-citizens-should-have-physical-proof-of-right-to-rent/>

upcoming elections. Local councils need to inform EU citizens about their right to vote in the May elections to avoid another situation where some EU citizens are denied their vote, as it happened in the 2019 European elections. We are asking local councils to write to EU citizens about their right to vote in the May 2020 local elections. *the3million* is also campaigning for EU citizens in the UK to preserve their right to vote and stand as candidates in all future local elections.

Local stakeholders and civil society should play a much bigger part in ensuring that no EU citizen is left behind as a result of Brexit and everyone is fully aware of their rights in the UK.

We look forward to working with you.

More information about our proposals:

<https://www.the3million.org.uk/goals>

For a copy of the Settled Status Survey report, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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on behalf of *the3million*

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