

The logo for the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) features the letters 'IMA' in a large, bold, white serif font. The text is centered between two horizontal teal bars of equal length.

Independent Monitoring Authority
For the Citizens' Rights Agreements

European citizens' experiences of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

Report on the IMA's Call for Evidence

Published April 2022

The IMA's Call for Evidence (June 2021): report infographic

We heard from a wide range of citizens



EU14 Countries

75%

EU8 Countries

16%

EU2 & other Countries

9%

We analysed nearly 1,000 responses

- ❖ The majority of respondents (citizens and advisers) reported a satisfactory to very good experience with EUSS
- ❖ 45% of respondents experienced some issue applying to the EUSS
- ❖ 23% of respondents experienced a problem using the share code

Respondents highlighted problems using the digital-only aspect of EUSS

1 in 3

Citizens found accessing proof of status problematic

1 in 2

Citizens had problems using the share code

39%

Advisers had difficulties updating applicants' personal details

We identified additional key findings about citizens' and advisers' experiences of the EUSS

- ❖ 57% of all respondents who contacted the Settlement Resolution Centre (SRC) had a negative experience
- ❖ 86% of advisers did not receive a decision on applications they had supported within 5 days
- ❖ 1 in 3 of all respondents did not receive a Certificate of Application (CoA) immediately after submitting their application



Respondents shared their specific concerns with us



On more than one occasion the system has frozen and I've been unable to access it. This is very worrying.

I can't contact them. They don't respond to emails and it's impossible to get through on the phone.

This system excludes people who are sometimes older, not IT savvy, no access to internet.

Introduction & background

About the Call for Evidence

To effectively monitor the implementation and application of the Citizens' Rights Agreements, a core role of the IMA is to gather and assess relevant intelligence. A Call for Evidence is one way in which the IMA can do this. Calls for evidence are particularly valuable as a means of hearing directly from European citizens, their families, and support organisations about their experiences.

This was the first Call for Evidence since the IMA launched as an organisation. It was issued as an online questionnaire to seek the views and experiences of European nationals and their family members living in the UK regarding the UK government's EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

Topics covered by the online questionnaire included making applications to the scheme, contacting the Settlement Resolution Centre for assistance, and accessing digital proof of status. Respondents had the additional option of providing a free text account of their overall experience with the scheme. The IMA also offered to supply a paper version of the Call for Evidence to anyone who requested it.

The anonymised online questionnaire ran for 4 weeks from late May to late June 2021. The IMA worked with advocate organisations in order to promote the Call for Evidence and ensure it reached as many European nationals as possible. Nearly 1,000 citizens and advisers (referred to as 'all respondents') responded to the survey, providing a rich source of information for the IMA to analyse.

About this report

This report contains the findings and assessments drawn from the results of the Call for Evidence. This Call for Evidence was explicitly undertaken to understand citizens' experiences with the EUSS. The analysis is informing the focus of ongoing work by the IMA in relation to the EUSS.

Almost half (45%) of all respondents experienced a problem when making an application to the EUSS, and 23% experienced problems in relation to their proof of status. Respondents also informed us about a range of concerns, from the inconsistent experiences when contacting the Settlement Resolution Centre, to the absence of physical proof of status, and problems accessing the digital app. Our assessment and findings explore these concerns and the issues they relate to.

We are immensely grateful to every citizen who completed and shared the questionnaire, as well as the many organisations who helped us to reach European citizens across the UK.

We are aware that this first Call for Evidence will not have captured the perspectives and experiences of *all* European citizens, reflecting only those who chose to engage with an online-only tool, shared primarily via social media.

About the IMA

We protect the rights of EU and EEA EFTA citizens (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and their family members in the UK and Gibraltar. We do this by monitoring UK public bodies to make sure they implement the rights of these citizens and by identifying any underlying issues. We can receive complaints and have powers to launch inquiries and take legal action. We are independent of government and are both professional and impartial in our work.

Methodology & Limitations

Approach

This Call for Evidence was conducted solely online and shared primarily through social media. As a result, we recognise certain groups of citizens may have been unable to access the survey, particularly where digital literacy is limited. In addition, we acknowledge the survey was undertaken in the English language only. This might have curtailed our ability to reach groups or individuals who are less proficient in English, which may have been eased by allowing advisers to contribute to the Call for Evidence.

Analysis

Statistics from survey results have been rounded and as such, percentages given may not total 100%.

Respondents (Citizens and Advisers)

This Call for Evidence was structured to steer respondents into two categories: citizens and advisers. Citizens represent first-person views of their application process, while advisers include either professional advisers supporting EUSS applicants, or family members of an EUSS applicant supporting them during the application process. Whilst both categories answered some of the same questions, some differed. For example, family members were not asked for demographical information. In order to reflect this, citizens' and advisers' responses were analysed separately and the collective response ('all respondents') are only reported where both categories answered the same question.

Using the Digital-Only System

Overview

48% of citizens who tried accessing their digital status experienced issues

From the qualitative responses submitted, we identified issues in three key areas relating to digital proof of status:

1. Accessing digital proof of status

Of those citizens who tried accessing their digital status, 48% experienced issues and 1 in 3 of those specifically cited technical issues.

“the details held for me were incorrect as their scanner scanned a K instead of a X and my passport number was not recognised.”

“Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't - I got so unsettled about the digital only status that I applied for dual nationality”

2. Using share codes

The most common issue cited again being technical issues. 13% highlighted problems when third parties requested proof of status and 10% found the process very complex.

“I tried to provide the code to a local authority for a personal application and they did not understand how to use the code”

“No one believes that a share code in a website is the way to prove my immigration status. They ask for my physical proof that I cannot provide because doesn't exist”

3. Updating personal details

57% of all respondents who tried updating personal details via the digital app found it to be a negative experience, with complexity and delays in changes being applied to the system being common observations. A large number of problems were experienced when updating passport details, as well as issues that arose where maiden names were used to process status rather than married names.

“Takes very long time to process and no feedback on when it is done.”

“Many people found their passport details were not updated months after either sending the passport by post or, more recently, online.”

“I have been granted status in my maiden name which I haven't used for 22 years. I have tried to get my status in my married name in vain.”

57% of all respondents who tried to update personal details reported a difficulty

The impact on confidence

We identified a total of 16% qualitative responses which highlighted concerns surrounding the digital nature of the proof of status. Across these respondents half stated they had *actually experienced issues* and the other half *perceived/anticipated issues* around digital status.

Those who perceive there will be potential issues when attempting to provide digital proof of status usually envisage this occurring as part of international travel and express a corresponding observation of the lack of physical proof:

“The fact that there is no physical proof, only digital proof, is of increasing concern to me. I'm terrified of what will happen when restrictions ease and I can finally visit family back home. Will I get hassled on my return? And what will I do if that's the case? My home... my life is here.”

Application Delays

Overview

Home Office guidance stated that non-complex cases should receive a decision within 5 days, while the majority of citizens (2 out of 3) reported waiting over 5 days. Where citizens provided further explanation of any delay, the majority cited requests to provide extra evidence/documentation to satisfy the Continuous Residency requirements of the process.

Only 1 in 3 citizens received a decision within 5 days

One of the themes from citizens' feedback about delays was the wait times for their child's application, often taking longer than parents' applications. Several personal accounts recall a straightforward application for themselves, but an unexplained delay for their child.

"The whole family applied for pre-settled on the same date. 24h waiting for my husband. 2 months for a daughter. And we added school reports with presence."

"My wife got her status within one week from applied day and my daughter in 4 months after requesting more documents."

"Application was fine for me but we had problems with our daughter's application. We are still waiting for the final outcome and notification"

Settlement Resolution Centre (SRC)

Overview

Respondents most frequently told us that the problems were due to long wait times and unhelpful information.

1 in 2 all respondents who contacted the SRC reported a negative experience

"The phonenumber put me on hold for 1 hour and 53 minutes the first time I called. Only after this long wait someone became available to handle my query"

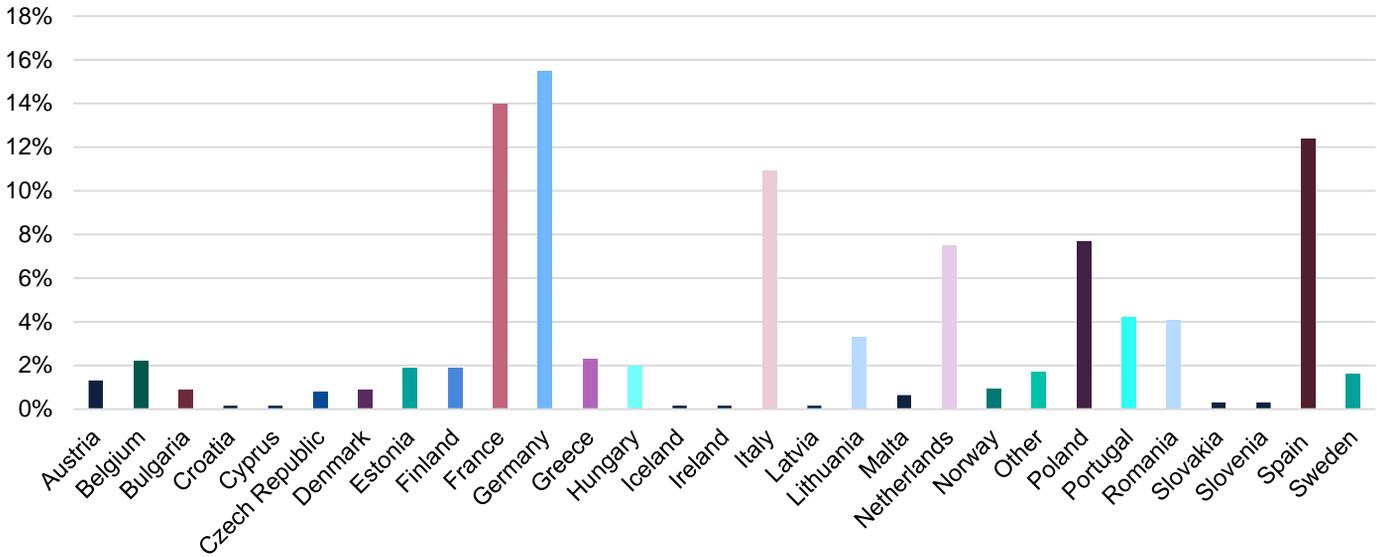
"I contacted the EU Settlement Resolution Centre on many occasions by email. My emails were either ignored, responded to with an automatic generic email or given an answer that did not relate to my enquiry."

"Impossible to speak to anyone. I usually hold on for an hour and then abandon and try again another day."

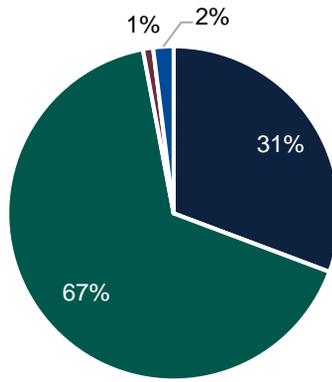
"I tried phoning on a number of occasions, different times, different days as I understand it was a busy line. Several times I was hung up on, two times the line rang off, saying the lines are now closed. Last time when I finally managed to get through I was on hold for 50 minutes."

Demographics of Citizens

Nationality of Respondents

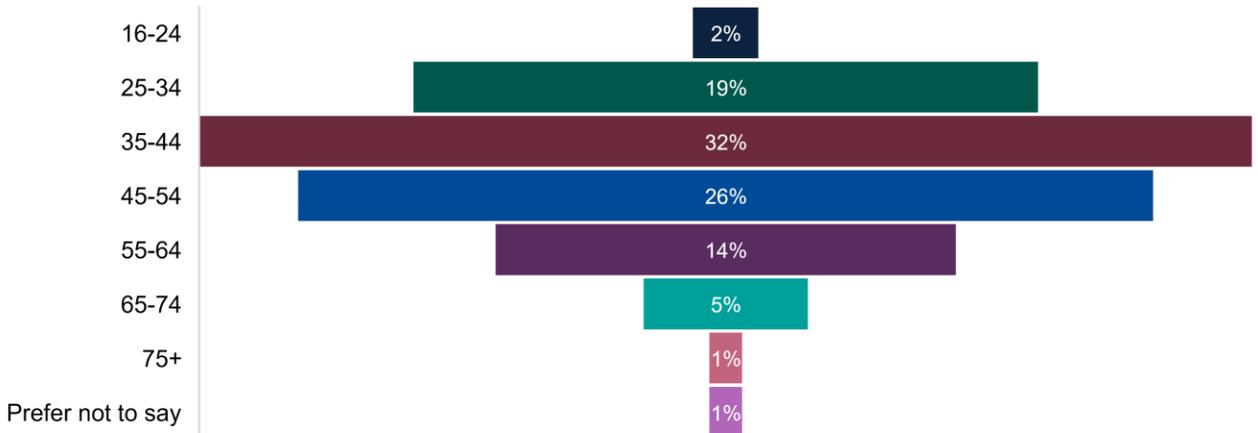


Gender of Citizens



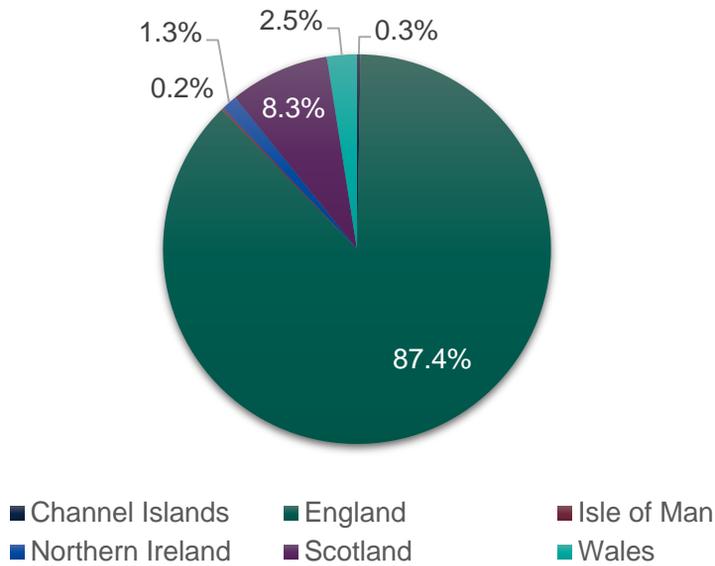
■ Male ■ Female ■ Other ■ Prefer not to say

Age of Respondents

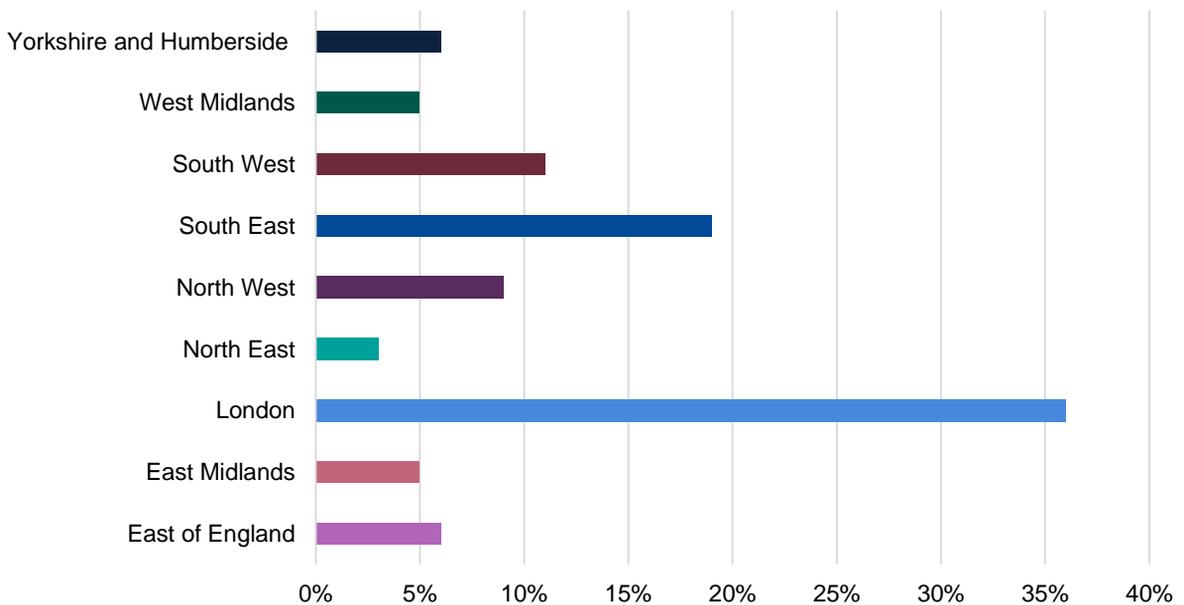


Demographics of Citizens

Where in the UK do you live?

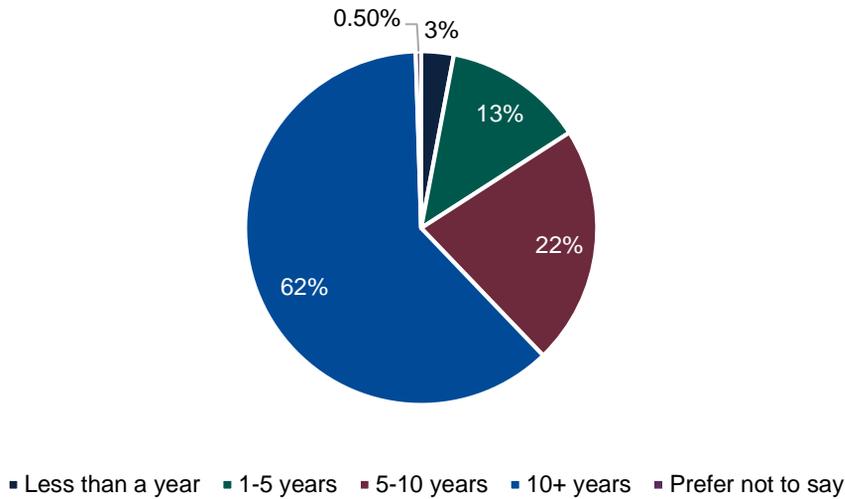


Regions of respondents within England



Demographics of Citizens

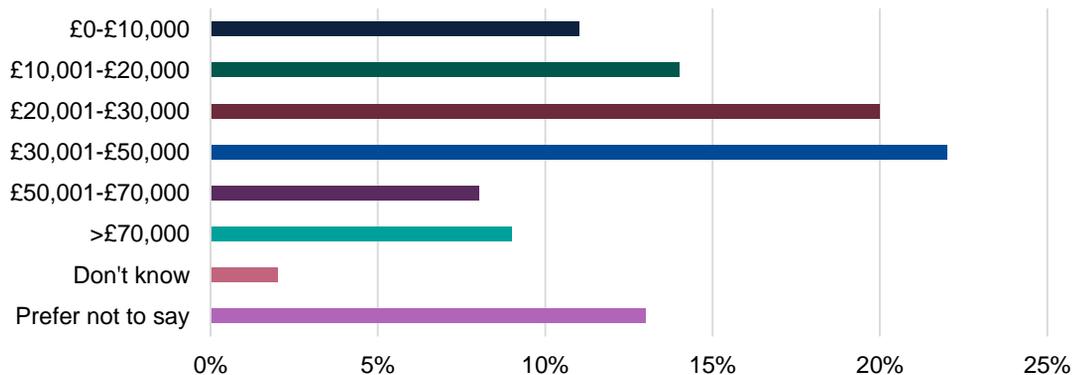
How long have you been living in the UK?



Employment Status

Employed (Full Time)	57%
Employed (Part Time)	11%
Retired	8%
Self-employed	13%
Studying	2%
Unemployed	10%

Income bands of respondents



Citizens' Responses

1. How would you describe your experience of making an application to EUSS?

Very good: **18%**

Good: **23%**

Satisfactory: **30%**

Poor: **20%**

Very poor: **9%**

2. How did you make your EUSS application?

Online application: **98%**

Paper application: **2%**

3. What was your experience when contacting the SRC?

Not contacted: **69%**

Negative: **18%**

Positive: **13%**

4. When was the decision of the EUSS application received?

Within 5 days: **37%**

Between 5 and 30 days: **41%**

Longer than 30 days: **22%**

5. Were you able to track the status of the application?

Yes: **53%**

No: **46%**

6. Did you receive a Certificate of Application immediately?

Yes: **64%**

No: **27%**

I don't know: **9%**

Citizens' Responses

7. What was the outcome of your EUSS application?

Still waiting for a decision: **8%**

My application was unsuccessful: **2%**

Granted Settled Status: **76%**

Granted Pre-settled Status: **14%**

8. Was the Settlement Status you were granted what you expected?

Yes: **95%**

No: **5%**

9. Have you made an application to upgrade pre-settled to settled status?

No: **92%**

Yes: **8%**

9.1. What was your experience of the process?

Positive: **53%**

Negative: **47%**

10. What is your experience of accessing your proof of status?

Easy: **38%**

It has not been tried: **28%**

Problematic: **34%**

11. What is your experience of using the share code?

Easy: **20%**

I have not tried to use the share code: **58%**

Problematic: **22%**

12. What is your experience of updating personal details?

Easy: **16%**

Personal details have not needed to be updated: **67%**

Problematic: **17%**

Advisers' Responses

1. How would you describe your experience of assisting applications to the EUSS?

Very good: **7%**

Good: **14%**

Satisfactory: **41%**

Poor: **23%**

Very poor: **14%**

2. How many EUSS applications have you supported?

Less than 10: **58%**

Between 10 and 100: **22%**

More than 100: **20%**

3. What was your experience when contacting the SRC?

I have not contacted the SRC: **29%**

Negative: **39%**

Positive: **33%**

4. Have you assisted anyone with making an application to upgrade their Pre-Settled Status to Settled Status?

No: **65%**

Yes: **35%**

5. Has a Certificate of Application always been received immediately?

I don't know: **12%**

No: **57%**

Yes: **32%**

6. Has the decision on the EUSS application always been received within 5 days?

I don't know: **4%**

No: **86%**

Yes: **9%**

Advisers' Responses

7. Were you able to track the progress of the application?

No: **64%**

Yes: **36%**

8. Have the applications decisions always matched what you were expecting?

No: **44%**

Yes: **56%**

9. What is your experience of accessing digital proof of status?

Easy: **34%**

I have not tried: **15%**

Problematic: **52%**

10. What is your experience of using the share code?

Easy: **28%**

I have not tried to use the share code function: **44%**

Problematic: **28%**

11. What is your experience of updating personal details?

Easy: **13%**

I have not tried: **48%**

Problematic: **39%**



IMA

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