



Issue 1: Travel

IMA  
Insights





Welcome to the first issue of IMA Insights.

We wanted to create a publication that looked closely at subjects that really matter to citizens. Our first issue is on travel, an essential part of life and a topic that comes up everyday at the IMA.

I hope IMA Insights is of interest to the citizens who call the UK home and to those who want to understand the rights of EU citizens post Brexit. I'd love to hear what you think. Email: [ima@citizensrights.org.uk](mailto:ima@citizensrights.org.uk).

A big thank you to those on our IMA Citizen's Panel who contributed to this first issue.

**Miranda Biddle, Chief Executive,  
IMA**

## Contents

Travel Snapshot	3
EUSS & Travel	4-6
Travel Checklist	7
Travel Experiences	8-10
My travel experience	11
Practical Travel Tips	12
Did you know?	13
Useful Links	14

Is this publication useful? Let us know on the QR code:



### About the IMA:

The IMA was set up to monitor and protect the rights of EU, EEA and EFTA citizens post Brexit. Find out more about us and our work on the [IMA website](#).

# A snapshot of travel to the UK

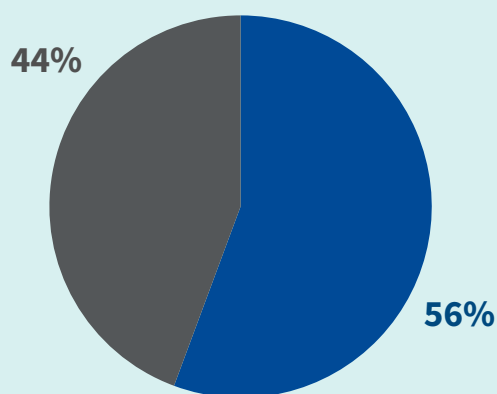
## Data on arrivals to the UK using Immigration Systems Statistics from 2022 - 2025



**30%** increase in travel to the UK between 2022 and 2024.

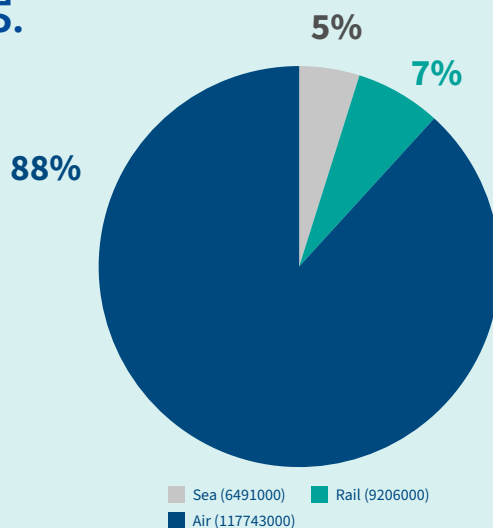
Between April 2024 to March 2025 there were 133.4 million arrivals in the UK, a **7%** increase on the previous 12 month period.

44 % of arrivals to the UK are non British Nationals



■ April 2024 - March 2025: Total British National arrivals (74275000)  
■ April 2024 - March 2025: Total Other Nationality arrivals (59165000)

Total arrivals to the UK by air, land, and sea: April 2024 - March 2025.



■ Sea (6491000) ■ Rail (9206000)  
■ Air (117743000)



Data source: Home Office Immigration System Statistics, Passenger Arrivals Summary Tables

# Travelling post Brexit

Being able to confidently leave and return to the country you live in is a crucial part of everyday life.

EU, EEA and EFTA nationals and their family members who were living in the United Kingdom before 31 December 2020, have the right to exit and enter the UK if they meet certain requirements set out in the Withdrawal and Separation Agreements (The Agreements).

To demonstrate they are entitled to these rights, they need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). But peoples' experiences around making an EUSS application will differ, depending on when they moved to the UK, when they made their application, and their circumstances. As a result, a person may have pre-settled status, settled status or a pending valid application for status.

It's essential to understand how different types of EUSS status relates to the right to enter and exit the UK, as well as the related entry requirements. The following examples of citizens with different stories should help bring this to life, followed by a travel checklist on page 7.

## EUSS Criteria:

The main criteria to apply for EUSS status are:

- You're from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and you were living in the UK by 31 December 2020
- You're the family member of someone from one of these countries and that person started living in the UK by 31 December 2020 and has pre-settled or settled status.

If you have Indefinite Leave to Remain but do not have an e-Visa yet, check whether you can apply to the EUSS.

Find more details on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

## Vera: Settled Status Holder

Vera moved to the UK from Spain in 2013 and has lived and worked as a physiotherapist in Cheltenham ever since. She applied to the EUSS in January 2020 and was granted settled status.

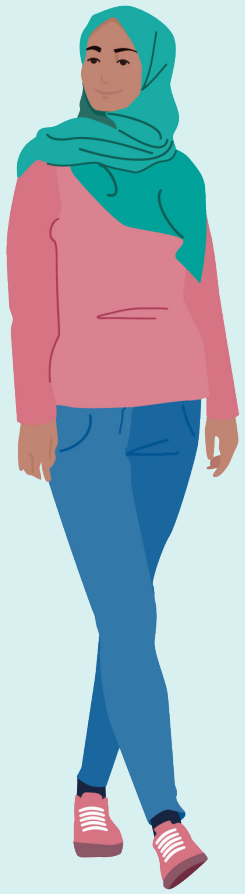
As Vera has settled status, she has the right to leave and re-enter the UK for up to five years at a time, with the correct documentation.

**Documentation Needed:** An eVisa and one of the following which must be registered on Vera's UKVI account.

- A valid passport
- A valid national identity card issued by Spain







## Maria: Pre-Settled Status Holder

Maria moved to Cardiff from Poland in December 2020. She has since been working as a primary school teacher. Maria applied to the EUSS in May 2021 and was granted pre-settled status but hasn't yet been granted settled status.

With pre-settled status, Maria has the right to leave and re-enter the UK with the correct documentation. However, Maria does need to be aware of how long she can be absent from the UK in order to secure settled status (see page 13 for more on this).

### Documentation Needed:

An eVisa and one of the following which must be registered on Maria's UKVI account.

- A valid passport
- A valid national identity card issued by Poland

## What's an eVisa?

An eVisa is a digital record of a person's identity and immigration status. If you have an EUSS status then you automatically have an eVisa. You can check your eVisa by logging into your UKVI account.

## Josie: Late applicant with CoA

Josie moved to the UK with her mother from France in 2017. She spent her teenage years in foster accommodation. Unfortunately, an EUSS application wasn't made on her behalf.

Josie has now applied to the scheme and is awaiting a decision. She had reasonable grounds for making a late application as one wasn't made for her when she was a child. Josie has received her Certificate of Application (CoA).

An EU citizen with a CoA has a right to exit and enter the UK while her application is pending and until appeal process is exhausted. Additional documentation will likely be needed for travel to evidence her eligibility for EUSS status.

### Documentation Needed:

A copy of Josie's CoA (found on her UKVI account).

- A valid passport or national ID card from France, linked to her UKVI account
- Evidence of residence in the UK before and since 31 December 2020



## Paulo - Joining Family Member with a Certificate of Application (CoA)

Paulo moved to London from Brazil earlier this year to live with his civil partner, who is an EEA citizen who was living in the UK before 31 December 2020, and who has EUSS status.

As a joining family member, Paulo applied for and received an EUSS family permit before his arrival in the UK. This permit allows him to travel into and out of the UK for the six months it is valid.

Paulo has made an application to the EUSS and received a CoA.

A carrier will accept him for travel to the UK as a non-visa national. If his family permit expires, Paulo could still use it as evidence of his relationship to an EEA citizen if he is asked for this at the UK border.

### Documentation Needed:

- A copy of Paulo's CoA (found on his UKVI account)
- The valid passport linked to Paulo's EUSS application
- Paulo's EUSS family permit. If that family permit has expired, he can still rely on it if awaiting an initial Home Office decision on his EUSS application

## Harvey - In time non-EEA applicant with a CoA

Harvey moved from Canada to London in October 2020 to join his wife Maria, a Spanish citizen who had started a new job at a bank. He applied for and received an EEA Family Permit to enter the UK and then applied to the EUSS in May 2021. His EUSS application was refused and he is waiting for the outcome of his appeal.

Harvey's EEA Family Permit has expired but as a non-visa national he can be accepted for travel by carriers. On arrival in the UK, he can rely on his CoA until the appeal on his application has concluded. He may be required to show evidence at the UK border that he previously had an EEA Family Permit and that he was living in the UK at 31 December 2020 and has continued to live in the UK since.

### Documentation Needed:

- A copy of his CoA ( found on his UKVI account)
- The valid passport or ID document linked to his EUSS application
- Harvey's expired EEA family permit or credible evidence of the family relationship which he relied upon in his EUSS application.



# Travel Checklist: what do I need?

*The first step, if you haven't done so already, is to make an application to the [EU Settlement Scheme](#). If you are applying after the relevant deadline you will need to provide evidence that you have reasonable grounds for your delay as well as proof of identity and nationality. Once your application is considered valid, you can access proof of this via your UKVI account. If you want to travel outside the UK while waiting for a decision on your application, you will need to ensure you have any supporting documentation.*

EUSS Status	What do I need?
Settled & Pre-settled Status	<p>An eVisa (which is part of your UKVI account)</p> <p>One of the following documents which must be registered on your UKVI account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A valid passport</li> <li>• A valid Irish passport card</li> <li>• A valid national identity card issued by an EU country, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein</li> </ul>
EEA nationals with pending late or in-time application to the EUSS and in receipt of a CoA (who were living in the UK by 31 December 2020)	<p>A copy of your CoA (which can be found on your UKVI account)</p> <p>One of the below documents which must be registered on your UKVI account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A valid passport</li> <li>• An Irish passport card</li> <li>• A valid national identity card issued by an EU country, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein.</li> </ul> <p>Evidence required at the border:</p> <p>Proof of residence in the UK before and since 31 December 2020</p>
Non-EU nationals with a pending late or in-time pending application to the EUSS and in receipt of a CoA (who were living in the UK by 31 December 2020)	<p>A copy of your CoA (which can be found on your UKVI account)</p> <p>The valid passport linked to your EUSS application.</p> <p>If you are a nationality which requires a visa to enter the UK, you will need either a visa or visa exemption document to travel - this can include an in-date or expired BRC.</p> <p>Evidence required at the border:</p> <p>An in-date or expired EEA family permit or in-date or expired BRC based on the family relationship as relied upon in your EUSS application OR proof that you were continuously resident in the UK before and since 31 December 2020 and that the family relationship you are relying on, existed during that time</p>
An applicant to the EUSS in receipt of a CoA (who has applied to the EUSS as a joining family member)	<p>A copy of your CoA (which can be found on your UKVI account)</p> <p>The valid passport or ID document linked to your EUSS application.</p> <p>If you are a visa national, you will need a valid visa or visa-exemption document to be accepted for travel, e.g. EUSS family permit.</p> <p>Evidence required at the border:</p> <p>Your EUSS family permit. If that family permit has expired, you can still rely on it at the border if you are awaiting an initial Home Office decision on your EUSS application. You cannot rely on it if your application has been refused and you are awaiting the outcome of an administrative review or out of country appeal.</p>

# Travel Experiences

The IMA gathers its information both directly from citizens and from the organisations we work with in the public, private and third sector. This helps us actively monitor the experiences of citizens around travel and associated rights.

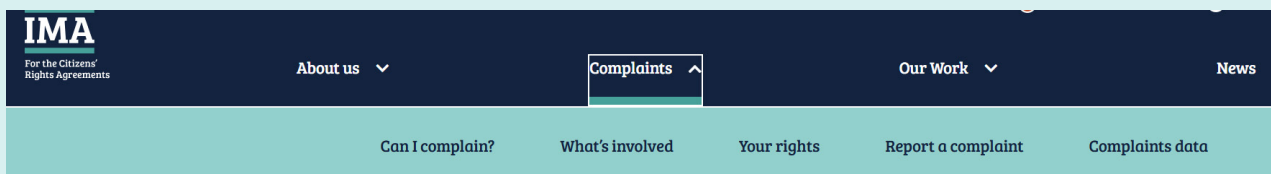
Whilst most people travel in and out of the UK without any problems, we are aware of information indicating that difficulties have been encountered. These instances have affected citizens with both settled status and pre-settled status, as well as people with a CoA who are waiting for an outcome to their EUSS application.

From what we have heard, some travel issues are resolved quite quickly and only result in a short delay for the affected person. But in other cases, re-entry to the UK has been denied. Below are the main issues we have identified:

1. Difficulties travelling as a CoA holder
2. Challenges using national ID cards as identification
3. Citizens being asked for an ETA
4. Share codes being refused as evidence of immigration status

These issues and associated rights are explored on the following pages.

**There are three ways you can tell the IMA about your travel experiences - the more we know, the more we can help resolve issues.**



## Welcome to the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements

### How can we help?

- Report a complaint
- Travel guidance and support
- Share your story
- Read our FAQs



ima@citizensrights.org.uk





# 1. Difficulties travelling as a CoA Holder

## What's been happening?

Citizens have reported difficulties using a CoA with airline carriers and at the UK border, with some not being able to re-enter the country. The Home Office guidance on CoAs is conflicting with some publications assuring that CoAs can be confirmed at the UK border and others warning citizens against travel.

Due to this uncertainty, citizens are worried about leaving the UK with the situation impacting their ability to go about a normal life. This is something the IMA has been seeking clarification on from the Home Office - [find out more around this](#).

## Can I travel with a CoA?

Citizens who hold a valid CoA have the right to leave and re-enter the UK, subject to meeting relevant requirements. Some citizens may therefore need to show further documentation in addition to their CoA at the UK Border. See pages 5 - 7 for more on this.

# 2. Challenges using national ID cards as identification

## What's been happening?

A national ID card is an official document in EU and other EEA member states which proves identity and can be used for travel by EEA citizens covered by the Agreements. There is no equivalent of ID cards for UK nationals (although it has been the subject of a [Government announcement](#) this year). Many EEA citizens also use ID cards as their official identity and nationality document when applying to the EUSS. The IMA has heard of incidences where both carrier employees and Border Force officials have mistakenly insisted that a passport must be used as a form of identification and that an ID card is not valid.

## Can I travel with an ID card?

The Agreements state that the UK can choose to stop accepting national identity cards for entry by relevant EU and other EEA nationals after 31 December 2025 if they do not include a chip that complies with the applicable International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards for biometric identification. More recently, the Home Office updated their guidance to state that while ICAO compliant ID cards can be used indefinitely, non-ICAO compliant ID cards can be used until the Home Office announces otherwise.

It's useful to know that most EU states now issue ICAO compliant ID cards with the exception of Denmark, that does not issue national ID cards valid for travel, and Ireland which does not issue ID cards. A biometric chip symbol looks like this:



### 3. Citizens being asked for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETAs)

#### What's been happening?

Some citizens with EUSS status have reported being asked for proof of an ETA by carriers. Some report that they have received conflicting advice from Border Force officials regarding ETAs.

#### What is an ETA and do I need one?

ETAs were first introduced in 2023 and enable those who do not require a visa or who do not already have a UK immigration status, to travel to the UK to seek entry as a visitor. They were introduced for EEA nationals in April this year, though not enforced as yet. However, they are NOT necessary for EUSS status holders. This is because a grant of pre-settled status or settled status is a type of UK immigration status and holders of EUSS status are not seeking entry to visit the UK.

Citizens with a CoA do not have a type of UK immigration status but are not eligible to apply for an ETA nor exempt from needing permission to travel under the ETA scheme. The IMA is urgently seeking clarification from the Home Office about how CoA holders will be able to travel to the UK once ETAs for EEA nationals become enforceable at some point in 2026.

### 4. Share codes being refused as evidence of immigration status

#### What's been happening?

We have been told of instances where carriers have not accepted share codes as evidence of EUSS status.

#### Can I use a share code to prove immigration status?

Share codes should be accepted by carriers as evidence of immigration status. If you experience any issues, please advise your carrier to contact the Carrier Support Hub on +44 300 369 0610 which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can provide support regarding all types of travel document requirements including identity documents, and both physical and eVisas.



**Read our fact  
sheet on share  
codes**



# IMA Citizens' Panel: My experience

*A big thank you to one of the IMA's citizen panel members who kindly shared his recent travel experience. While he eventually travelled without issue, he did encounter challenges due to uncertainty around securing EUSS status for his newborn.*

**As EUSS status relates to travel rules, please can you share your EUSS status?**

I have pre-settled status along with my wife and our elder child. I am a national of Portugal.

**How have you found travelling post Brexit in general?**

In general, it's been fine. I've been asked questions such as 'why are you in the UK?' and 'where do you live' but nothing else. You could consider it an inconvenience but not a bad experience.

**You told the IMA about difficulties organising travel when you had a new baby. What happened?**

Both our parents live in India. We wanted them to meet the baby and my wife's father was unwell at the time, so we wanted to see him in case anything happened. But it was a very difficult trip to plan.

We knew we had to get EUSS status for our new baby as babies born in the UK don't automatically get status. Applications need to be made within 90 days of their birth, so I had to quickly go to Portugal first to get a new passport for the baby. We then made an application and received a CoA for the baby.

**Were you aware of difficulties travelling on a CoA?**

Yes, and we didn't want to risk not being allowed back into the UK. We hoped we would get EUSS status for the baby quickly – the Home Office website says it takes 30 days - but it took almost three months.

**How did this affect your travel plans?**

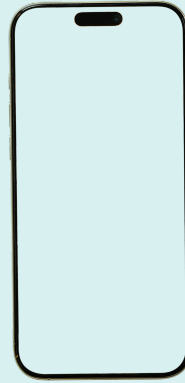
It was very hard to plan. We needed to travel during the school holidays as we would get fines if our older child missed school. I had also booked time off work but we had to change everything and re-schedule. I tried to get an update from the resolution centre but was told there was no timeline despite the 30 days written on the Home Office website. I then raised the situation with my MP who contacted the Home Office. They said they were doing criminal checks but what checks? The baby was a newborn and my wife and I have EUSS status.

**It sounds very difficult. Did you make the trip in the end?**

Yes, we did eventually. I wanted to share my experience as the EUSS application process is a challenge for parents and some people are not aware of the potential issues.

# Practical travel tips

Know your rights, it will help you advocate for yourself. You could show a copy of this publication to help explain your rights when travelling.



If you experience an issue with an airline carrier, ask them to contact the Carrier Support Hub, open 24 hours, 7 days a week. The Hub gives support and advice to carriers around documentation needed by people travelling.

**+44 300 369 0610**

*One of the IMA's Citizen Panel members who has travelled a lot recently, shared some tips that have helped him avoid issues when travelling.*

- When you're travelling you may not be able to get online, or your phone battery may have died. It helps to have printed copies of your share code. However, as well as the share code itself, I recommend printing off the page before that one. It is called, 'This is what the checker will see' and includes your picture, date of birth, nationality and EUSS status. Also, when printing you should select the option that includes the Headers and Footers as this will include the GOV.UK address in your print-out.
- If you are an EEA citizen and you want your identity and nationality document to be a national ID card, take note of your carrier's policy before you travel to ensure it is compliant with the Agreements. It may be that their 'travel documents' options indicate that ID cards are not valid after 31 December 2025, with no reference to the biometric card proviso. And when you are making a booking, check if the part of the form where you are adding passenger information – this may be called 'Advance Passenger Information (API)' or 'Add passports or travel documents' – gives you the option to add a National ID card. If it doesn't you are likely to encounter problems trying to travel on an ID card. Don't leave this part of your booking until the last minute – this information is sent by the carrier to the Home Office for UKVI checks ahead of your travel.
- Always make sure that all your travel identity documents are registered on your UKVI account. So, if you normally travel on a passport but have obtained a new national ID card which you will be using, ensure both documents are registered.



# Did you know? Travel facts...

## Your child might not have the right to enter the UK

Did you know that many children born in the UK to EEA nationals do not automatically have the right to exit and enter the country?

An EUSS application may be necessary for children to evidence that they have applied for certain rights in the UK, including exiting and entering the country.

On page 11, one of the IMA's citizens panel members, shares his complications around planning travel with a new baby.



Read the [IMA's fact sheet on securing rights for your child](#)

## The rules around time out of the UK and EUSS status

There have recently been changes to the amount of time people can leave the UK if they have pre-settled status. The change has been positive and increased flexibility in the system.

Previously, citizens with pre-settled status had to spend at least six months in each year of a five-year period in the UK in order to retain their status and eventually convert to settled status. However, from July this year, those with settled status need to spend 30 months in total, the equivalent to two and a half years, within a five-year period living in the UK. While the overall amount of time absent is essentially the same, the way it can be taken leads to more freedom.

The changes around absences can also be applied retrospectively. If for example, a citizen with pre-settled status had to leave the UK for a year and a half during Covid, they should still be eligible for settled status in terms of their time spent in the country.

Once EUSS settled status has been secured, people can spend up to five years outside of the UK without it impacting their immigration status.

## Carriers can get fined by the Government

Government guidance says that carriers are liable for a charge of up to £2,000 for every passenger who arrives in the UK without a valid immigration document and a visa if required.

The IMA is shortly launching a survey to employees at airline and ferry companies to gather insight into the employees' understanding of Home Office policies and guidance, and the related practicalities of applying them.



# Useful links around travel



[IMA Travel Guidance](#) on our website

Carrier Support Hub:

+44 300 369 0610

Gov.UK guidance:

[Entering the UK under the EU Scheme and EU Settlement Scheme family permit](#)

[EU Settlement Scheme: information for status holders and applicants](#)

[Apply to the EUSS \(Settled and Pre-Settled Status\)](#)

[Apply for an EU Settlement Scheme family permit to join family in the UK](#)

[EU Settlement Scheme Family Permits - Full Guidance PDF](#)

The information contained in this publication is aimed at providing practical guidance to EU and EEA EFTA citizens and their family members who hold EUSS status or have applied for EUSS status on what to expect when seeking to travel into the UK. The information is based on the rules in place as at 8 December 2025. The inclusion of the information in this document does not signify the IMA's acceptance that all such rules fully and effectively implement the requirements of the Withdrawal Agreement.