



Rt. Hon Hamish Falconer MP  
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and European Relations  
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London  
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Our reference: MC2026/13695

Monique Hawkins,  
CEO, the3million

Fiona Godfrey,  
Director, British in Europe

20 August 2026

Dear Monique and Fiona,

Thank you for your letter of 20 July addressed to the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP, regarding relations between the UK and EU. I am replying as the minister responsible for European and Intergovernmental Relations. Please accept my apologies for the delay in my response.

The Government remains fully committed to respecting and safeguarding the rights guaranteed to both European Union citizens in the UK and UK nationals living in the European Union under Part II of the Withdrawal Agreement. The protection of citizens' rights remains a crucial pillar of the UK-EU relationship.

I am very grateful for the work that both British in Europe and the3million have done to support, protect, and uphold the rights of the UK nationals and EU citizens who are beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement. I understand from my officials that your work in this regard continues to be invaluable. The Government will continue to work closely with you both to make these shared goals a reality.

As Minister for European Relations, I will continue to work closely with Ministers across the Government to identify opportunities that make it easier for EU citizens to access their rights, removing administrative complexities or unnecessary burdens. It is very positive that over 100,000 EU citizens have already been granted settled status via the Home Office's automated process, and with our generous absence policy now in place we will ensure that many more Withdrawal Agreement beneficiaries will be able to remain in the UK and acquire settled status.

To support individuals experiencing difficulties at any stage of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) process, the Settlement Resolution Centre continues to provide direct advice and assistance. The Government's view remains that digital status is the safest and most efficient way for people to access and demonstrate their rights, as over 5.8 million EU nationals and their family members have done so in the UK. Unlike paper documents, a digital status cannot be lost, stolen, or damaged, ensuring that individuals always retain permanent, verifiable proof of their status.

You highlighted concerns about the impact of wider changes to the immigration system on British citizens living overseas with foreign national family members. The Family Immigration Rules, including the minimum income requirement for sponsoring a family visa, need to balance respect for family life with ensuring that migrants are not a burden on the taxpayer and that the economic wellbeing of the UK is maintained. To help us to strike the right balance and to provide a solid evidence base for any change, the Home Secretary commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to review the financial requirements in the Family Immigration Rules. Conducting a full review of the financial requirements across the family routes will ensure that we have a clear and consistent system. The MAC's recommendations are being considered in detail alongside the work being carried out as a result of the Immigration White Paper, which made clear that family migration would be reformed to tackle the overly complex financial requirements. The Home Secretary will respond to the MAC's report in due course, and the aforementioned White Paper is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restoring-control-over-the-immigration-system-white-paper>

The Immigration White Paper also sets out the principle that settlement should be earned through contribution to the UK economy and society. Current criteria do not reflect this and reforms will seek to reward those migrants demonstrating sustained work, strong English language skills and community contribution before gaining settled status. We understand how important these issues are to individuals, families and communities. That is why there was a public consultation to gather views on the proposals. We are now reviewing all the responses received. This will help to inform the development of the final earned settlement model, which will be decided by the Home Secretary and communicated in due course. However, we have been clear that the partners of British citizens will continue to benefit from a shorter pathway to settlement (five years, as now).

Fees for immigration and nationality applications are kept under review. However, the Government does not make a profit from those fees: any income from fees set above the cost of processing applications is utilised for the purpose of running the immigration system, reducing reliance on taxpayer funding.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight my renewed dedication to working with my European Commission counterpart on all citizens' rights issues. The importance of this relationship to the success of treaty implementation is key, and as such I will ensure that Government officials across departments continue to put citizens' rights at the heart of our work with the EU at all levels of engagement.

Thank you for taking the time to write about these important matters.

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Falconer', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Rt. Hon Hamish Falconer MP**  
**Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and European Relations**