as you may have seen in the media, the date for the United Kingdom leaving the European Union was latterly extended to 31 October 2019. In early September the British parliament passed legislation designed to ensure that the departure from the EU would be postponed for a further three months (to 31 January 2020) if a withdrawal agreement with the EU is not concluded in time. At the present time there is no final clarity about whether a withdrawal agreement will be concluded or the actual date of the UK’s departure from the EU. Nevertheless, regardless of whether Brexit happens with or without a withdrawal agreement, it will certainly have an impact on your residency rights as a UK national already living in Germany. We are therefore writing to inform you about the consequences of Brexit for your residency rights, such as these are known at the current time.

**UK departure from the EU with Withdrawal Agreement**

If the previously negotiated Withdrawal Agreement takes effect, a transitional period is envisaged to run until the end of 2020, during which time existing free movement rights, to which EU citizens are entitled, will continue to apply. Having consideration for the privileged arrangements for British citizens envisaged by the Withdrawal Agreement, the general rules for third-country nationals (non-EU citizens) will not apply to you until 1 January 2021.

**UK departure from the EU without Withdrawal Agreement (“No-deal Brexit”)**

If a Withdrawal Agreement does not come into force, as things stand a transitional provision has been planned in national German law for a period of at least nine months from the date of the UK’s departure from the EU. Under this rule, as a British citizen already living in Germany you will be exempt from the requirement to obtain a residency permit for nine months from the date of departure, and your continued stay and engagement in any economic activity in Germany will remain lawful during this time.
During this transitional phase you will need to apply for a residency permit to ensure that, for the period thereafter, your continued stay and engagement in any economic activity in Germany also remain lawful. You will be able to submit your application in Hamburg, without first having to make a visa application from outside Germany, and you will require a valid British passport for the process. By making an application you will safeguard your rights, even if the Foreigners Authority (Ausländerbehörde) does not take a decision until a later date. Furthermore, in the event of a No-deal Brexit it is also currently planned to grant residency permits to British citizens and their family members already living in Germany by applying the same conditions as have hitherto applied to you under European Union free movement rules.

In order to submit your application we ask that you and any family members living together with you in Hamburg register online during the transitional period following the UK’s departure from the EU. Once the concrete date of departure is known, online registration will be activated on the website of the Einwohner-Zentralamt (www.hamburg.de/eza). Like a formal application for a residency permit, this registration serves to safeguard your rights. After registering you will receive a confirmation letter informing you of the subsequent steps. You can also find more information about residency for British citizens on the website of the Einwohner-Zentralamt.

By the end of August, 559 British citizens had been naturalised in Hamburg this year. If you have been living in Germany for a long time or have a German spouse, acquiring German citizenship could be an option for you. You can find more information about naturalisation at www.einbuergerung.hamburg.de. Even in the event of a No-deal Brexit you can retain your British nationality when naturalising as a German citizen, provided you apply before the date of the UK’s departure from the EU and otherwise meet the conditions for naturalisation.

At the request of the British Embassy in Berlin we are also attaching a letter from the British Ambassador to Germany and an embassy handout with further information about Brexit.

Yours sincerely

Einwohner-Zentralamt
Information on Brexit for British citizens living in Germany

24 September 2019

Dear British citizen,

As you will know, the UK government's firm goal is for the UK to leave the European Union on 31 October, and the UK is now working hard to reach a withdrawal agreement with the EU in time for this exit date. You may also be aware that the UK Parliament has passed legislation requiring the UK Government, in the event that no deal has been reached, to seek an extension of our membership. But a no deal Brexit remains a possibility – not least because any decision to extend our membership would require not just an application from the UK but also the agreement of all 27 other EU members.

In any scenario, both the UK government and the German government are committed to protecting the rights of citizens. Here in Germany, it has been one of my personal priorities as the UK’s Ambassador to ensure that UK nationals have access to all the information they need.

With this message, I would like to update you on how Brexit could affect you and highlight the steps you need to take to ensure you can continue to live and work in Germany.

If the UK leaves the EU with a deal, your rights here in Germany will be protected without the need for immediate action on your part. However, you will need to get new documentation in due course to confirm your rights under the Withdrawal Agreement. This includes the right to continue to live and work here with your family, as well as access to education, benefits, healthcare and pensions on the same rules as now. For the case in which the UK leaves the EU without a deal, the German cabinet has adopted a draft law that would ensure that every UK national currently living in Germany under freedom of movement rules can stay. Germany has also adopted legislation to provide some access to social security in this scenario, but there might be changes for you, depending on your circumstances.

In the event of the UK leaving the EU without a deal, as well as applying for a new residence permit at your local Foreigners Authority (Ausländerbehörde), you might also need to renew your passport or take steps to have your UK qualifications recognised in Germany, and you will need to exchange your UK driving licence for a German one before exit day. Please check the information enclosed with this letter carefully and follow the steps applicable to you.

You can find all the latest information online in the UK government’s Living in Germany guide (http://www.gov.uk/livingingermany), where you can also sign up for email updates. The Embassy and Consulates are continuing to run information events, both in cities across Germany and online, where my team and I, as well as representatives of the German authorities, stand ready to answer your questions directly.

I understand that this is an unsettling time for you, but hope that this information is useful.

If you have further questions, please submit them here: www.gov.uk/contact-consulate-berlin

Yours sincerely,

Sebastian Wood

Sebastian Wood
Ambassador
Get ready for Brexit

Find out what you need to do to continue living and working in Germany after Brexit

Consult the guide for UK nationals living in or moving to Germany and stay up to date by signing up for email alerts: gov.uk/livingingermany

Follow us on social media: BritsinGermany UKinGermany

UK NATIONALS

Residency
UK nationals living in Germany should ensure that they are correctly registered with their local Einwohnermeldeamt.

After Brexit, UK nationals, irrespective of whether they have in the past been issued with an “unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis”, will have to apply to their local Foreigners Authority (Ausländerbehörde) for a new residence permit to continue living in Germany.

See our guidance: gov.uk/government/publications/germany-residence-information-after-eu-exit/foreigners-authorities-in-germany

Healthcare
If you are working in Germany and paying German social security contributions, your healthcare via a German health insurer (Krankenkasse) will not be affected by Brexit. However, for travel to the UK German-issued European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) may no longer be valid. Please take out travel insurance.

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal and your healthcare is currently provided for by the UK government via a S1 form, this form may no longer be valid after Brexit. In this case, you would be required to join a German Krankenkasse within 3 months of exit day.

If there’s no-deal Brexit, UK-issued EHICs may no longer be valid in Germany.

Learn more: gov.uk/livingingermany#healthcare

Passports
If you want to travel to other EU countries after Brexit, adult and child passports should be valid for at least 6 months from your date of travel.

Before you book travel, use this tool to check that your passport is valid: passport.service.gov.uk/check-a-passport

Additionally, German Foreigners Authorities have advised that residence permits will need to be renewed every time you renew your passport.

Driving
UK nationals resident in Germany should exchange their UK driving licence for a German driving licence before Brexit.

Your local Bürgeramt will be able to advise on where to do this. You will be allowed to drive on your German licence when visiting the UK. An International Driving Permit is not a suitable alternative to exchanging your licence.

Professional qualifications
If you hold UK professional qualifications you should get them recognised in Germany before Brexit.

Find out how to do this at: anerkennung-in-deutschland.de

Learn more
More information on how Brexit could affect you, including your access to pensions and benefits, can be found on our Living in Germany guide: gov.uk/livingingermany

If you have any further questions, please contact us at gov.uk/contact-consulate-berlin

Information correct on date of publication: 24/09/2019