

DECEMBER 2020

# VOISINS VOICES

A BRITISH EMBASSY PARIS NEWSLETTER



British Embassy  
Paris

## WELCOME

Welcome to Voisins Voices! Firstly apologies for not having been in touch through this Newsletter for a while, we are trying to get active through this channel again. We have put together some key information for you in this edition, all about preparation for the end of Transition Period on the 31 December 2020, and necessary action you might still need to take. Hopefully you have been keeping yourselves up to date by visiting our Living in France Guide online, but if not please [click on this link](#) to see more detail and register to get important updates.

Feel free to forward this to any friends, family, or new acquaintances living in France, to whom this will be of interest. To get added to the distribution list, they can email [France.Enquiries@fco.gov.uk](mailto:France.Enquiries@fco.gov.uk).



## Settled in France?

- Apply for residency now and obtain your Withdrawal Agreement Residency Permit
- Make sure you're registered for healthcare
- Check your passport validity online and renew it now if you need to

Find out more at [gov.uk/livinginfrance](https://gov.uk/livinginfrance)

- ✓ Check
- ✓ Change
- ✓ Go

# BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE: LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

Every month the British Ambassador to France, Ed Llewellyn, shares an insight into his role, via The Connexion French News and Views (<https://www.connexionfrance.com/>).

Here is his column for December.

“As I write, we are back in lockdown in France and the UK, as both countries act to stop the spread of the second wave of coronavirus.

Although the numbers of patients in hospital remain high, the measures we are all taking do seem to be starting to have an impact. News on vaccines is also promising.

But it is a worrying time for many, I know, particularly with Christmas ahead and uncertainty about how rules and travel restrictions might affect our ability to gather with friends and family.



As soon as there is any news affecting travel, we will update you about what it means for you. In the meantime, we continue to adapt the way we mark important moments.

This year was the first time in peacetime since 1924 that the Royal British Legion was not able to hold a Remembrance Day service in Paris. Instead, the Embassy created two online events – a private one for staff and a service in partnership with the RBL, which we streamed on our Facebook page.

Armistice Day this year also marked the centenary of the burial of the British unknown warrior at Westminster Abbey. It was moving to visit Boulogne and to stand on the quayside where he was carried aboard HMS Verdun for his final journey home – and then a few days later to pay tribute at the Arc de Triomphe, where the French unknown warrior was buried on the same day in 1920.

A century later, our militaries still serve alongside each other all over the world, as RAF Chinook helicopters are doing today, supporting French forces in Mali.

The negotiation on the UK’s future relationship with the EU continues.

Whatever the outcome, this embassy will support you with information on what to expect and how to prepare. We have just launched a new series of readiness newsflashes to help business. Our Facebook Q&A remains open every Monday evening and we are planning more online outreach events for you to ask us your questions and get the latest information about the actions you need to take.

The most important of these, of course, is applying for a residency permit via the French government online portal before June 2021.

A word about healthcare. If you are a UK national living in France, or who moves here permanently before the end of this year, you can continue to access healthcare here for as long as you remain resident. You will, though, need to apply for a new EHIC card in order to access healthcare when travelling in another EEA country. Our “Healthcare for UK nationals living in France” page on gov.uk and social media have more.

I know exchanging driving licences remains frustrating. But the French government has confirmed that UK licences will be recognised after January 1, 2021, and UK nationals visiting France will not require an International Driving Permit after the transition period.



As we look forward to happier and healthier times when friends and family can visit again, this is one less piece of admin to remember.

An important moment this month – allowing us to look ahead to 2021 – will be the Climate Ambition Summit, as the UK prepares to host COP26 in Glasgow next year. On December 12, the UK will co-chair the virtual Ambition Summit with France and the UN, both to mark the fifth anniversary of the Paris Climate Change Accord and push for the highest possible ambition globally for next year.

The science is clear: we must respond to the threat of climate change and ensure a greener, cleaner future for us all.” First 'crop' of honey.

Closer to home, we have been trying to do our bit at the embassy – we are delighted that our bees have delivered their first “crop” of honey!

May I take this opportunity to wish an early Merry Christmas to you all.

## FRENCH IMPLEMENTATION OF CITIZENS' RIGHTS

The French government has published the decree and ministerial order explaining how British citizens' rights will be protected under the Withdrawal Agreement, and what supporting documents they need to provide.

Many of you have been asking about the requirement to show minimum resources if you are applying as a retiree or inactive person and have lived in France for less than 5 years. This has been confirmed in the legislation and on the application portal as the minimum level of work welfare benefit called "revenu solidarité active" (RSA) whatever your age or household composition (currently 564,78€ per month). In any case, this figure is a guideline for prefectures: flexibility will be shown and your whole situation will be taken into account.

Remember: [Apply before 1 July 2021](#).

You can read on our Facebook page [a translation of the French legislation](#) done for the Embassy by a juriste linguiste.

Read the full [decree](#) and [ministerial order](#) in French here.

For more information, read our [Living in France Guide](#).



# TOP TEN FAQs ON RESIDENCY

In our weekly Facebook Q&As to answer your questions about Covid-19, travel, and UK transition, we've noticed some recurring questions on residency. So here we have pulled together our answers to the most frequently asked ones. Full details on applying for residency are available on the application website and the Living in France Guide.

## 1. How do I apply for a residency permit? What are the key dates?

Now that the UK has left the EU, if you are British and living in France by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, you need to apply for a new residency permit in order to protect your rights under the Withdrawal Agreement. You still need to apply for a residency permit even if you already have an EU carte de séjour, or are married or PACSed to a French person. You must apply for the permit before 1 July 2021 via the French government website. Your non-EU family members and dependants also need to apply for a Withdrawal Agreement residency permit via the website. All the information you need to apply is on the application website. Consult the flowchart, which details the supporting documents you need according to your situation.

Key dates:

- 19 October 2020 ➔ Online residency permit system opened
- 20 November ➔ Decree published in Official Journal
- 29 November ➔ Ministerial Order published in Official Journal
- 31 December 2020 ➔ Transition period ends - must be resident in France by this point
- 30 June 2021 ➔ Last day for residency applications\*

\* You need to be in possession of your new residency permit from 1 October 2021.

## 2. What does being “legally resident” mean in practice?

The conditions for legal residency under the Withdrawal Agreement are the same as now for EU citizens. These are:

- Having a professional salaried or self-employed activity (or having had such an activity or being registered as a jobseeker);
- Having sufficient resources for themselves and their family, as well as health insurance;
- Being a student or undergoing vocational training, as well as having health insurance;
- Being a member of the family of a British citizen who is based in France prior to 31 December 2020 and having a right of residency (spouse, partner, child, ascendant or dependent family member or belonging to the household of a British citizen);
- Already being a permanent resident (having previously worked, studied or been self-sufficient for 5 years or more).

In practice, this means that if you do not yet have the right to permanent residency because you have not yet been here for 5 years or more, you will either be studying; working or running a business; registered as a jobseeker if unemployed; inactive but able to support yourself; or a close family member of someone who meets these conditions.

The French government has said it will take a generous and flexible approach and that their starting point is to grant residency wherever possible. You will be able to provide extra information in your application and to correct any errors or omissions with the Prefecture later. More detail on exactly what will be assessed is available on the application website and the Living in France guide.

## 3. Do I really need to apply for a new residency permit? I already have a 10 year or permanent Carte de Séjour / am married or PACSed to a French or EU person / have lived here for thirty years. Should I apply in my own name, or as a spouse of a French/EU person?

The short answer is yes. All UK nationals living in France need to apply. The current carte de séjour, whether it is a short-term or a permanent one, is for EU citizens and will cease to be valid for British nationals. If you hold a permanent carte de séjour, there is a simplified process to exchange it via the new online residency system. You will be automatically entitled to a permanent ten-year residency permit under the Withdrawal Agreement. Shorter-term carte de séjour holders also need to apply through the new residency system.

Being PACSed or married to a French person does not afford you automatic residency status so, if this applies to you, you still need to apply for a residency permit. The same applies if you are married to an EU national. However, whereas there is a specific category for partner or spouse of a French national on the WA application website, there is no such category for that of an EU national. Therefore, for the latter, you have the option of applying in your own right for a WA residency permit, or regularising your status through the current system for non-European family via your Prefecture.

You might be considering applying for French nationality but, as the process can take time, we strongly recommend that you apply for a residency permit as well to ensure your rights are protected if there is a delay in receiving nationality. Nationality and residency applications are two separate procedures.

#### **4. Do I need to apply if I already have a temporary carte de séjour or have already applied for a carte de séjour at my prefecture, and/or I applied through the “No Deal” website last year?**

In short, no matter which carte de séjour you hold or have applied for, you need to apply for a residency permit through the new system, unless you have confirmation of an application through the online “no deal” process.

What is the online “no deal” process? Last year, the French authorities opened the online system for a short period in preparation for the possibility that the UK would leave the EU without a Withdrawal Agreement. Some British people living in France made a residency permit application during this period. Those applications have been stored and the French government has said that those applicants do not need to re-apply. If this applies to you, you would have received an email confirmation earlier this year. Local Prefectures will start processing those applications shortly. If you have moved ‘département’ since making your application, however, you do need to apply again.

In certain regions, a backlog of EU carte de séjour applications meant that some British people who applied for a carte de séjour up to 18 months ago had their applications put on hold, or were still going through the process just before the new system launched. If you are part of this group, you need to apply for a new WA residency permit via the online system.

#### **5. My son or daughter was brought up in France and educated here but has returned to the UK for university. How can they apply for a residency permit?**

Studying abroad is not an obstacle to obtaining a residence permit as long as an individual's usual residence is still France. Those who've lived in France more than five years can apply for permanent residency in their own right. Those who have not, should apply as a family member of a British national (and not as a student if they are studying outside of France). The process is the same as that described above.

When asked for proof of residency in 2020, individuals should indicate their family's place of residence (or that of a third party if applicable), unless they have a personal domicile in France. See more information in the FAQ document on the [application website](#).



## **6. I am self-employed / retired early / unemployed due to Covid – can I still apply for a residency permit?**

Yes, you should still apply for a new residency permit under the Withdrawal Agreement. If you have been living in France for over five years, you will be eligible for permanent residency and your current employment status does not matter. For those of you who have been here for less time, the French authorities will take a case-by-case approach, considering your history and personal circumstances.

Their intention is to allow UK nationals resident here to stay and the authorities have told us they will be pragmatic and show good will to anyone that may have been negatively impacted by COVID, for example losing income or relying on financial aid. If a decision is made that you disagree with, there are routes of appeal with the French authorities. You can also inform the Embassy via our website.

## **7. I have a second home in France and want to spend more than 90 days in 180 there. What should I do?**

If you are not legally resident in France before 1 January 2021, then you will have to follow France's immigration rules for long stays. You will not need a visa when travelling to the Schengen area for short stays of up to 90 days in every 180-day period. However, if you want to stay longer in France, you will need to look at visa options. You can find information about this on the French government's website [here](#). The FCO's France Travel Advice page always provides the most up to date information on entry requirements for travellers.

## **8. I'm a dual French-UK national or a dual UK-EU national. Do I need to apply for the residency permit? If not, are there any advantages to it?**

If you are living in France and hold another EU nationality through birth or naturalisation in addition to your British nationality, then you are still covered by the Withdrawal Agreement. If your second EU nationality is not French, you can choose to apply for a WA residency permit, but you do not need this to protect your rights in France. See more information in the FAQ document on the [application website](#).

We are waiting for the French authorities to confirm how dual British-FR nationals in France who do not need a residency permit can show that they also have other rights under the Withdrawal Agreement. For UK-related rights, such as eligibility for an uprated UK State Pension, the government will casework your entitlements as and when you reach state pension age or seek to access a UK benefit or service. This will ensure your entitlements are consistent with your rights under the Withdrawal Agreement. Further information is available [here](#).

## **9. I think I may have trouble completing the application when the system opens – what assistance is available to me?**

The French authorities have provided clear information about the application process and we expect most UK nationals in France to be able to complete the simple online application by themselves. However, for those not comfortable with technology, computer access points with personal support may be available in certain Prefectures – check with your prefecture to find out more.

The Embassy is working with a number of British associations across France to share information about the process and offer support where possible. Speak to your local British association, neighbour or friend to find out where to get support.

Four organisations in France (funded by the UK government) are providing practical support to British nationals who may have difficulty in completing their residency applications. Support is available for pensioners, disabled people, and people living in remote areas or who have mobility difficulties. Services include answering questions about and guidance through the application procedure and supporting people facing language barriers or difficulty accessing technology. If you or someone you know may have difficulty completing the application, you can contact these organisations using the details on our [Living in France Guide](#) to discuss how they may be able to help you.

If you struggle with mobility, speak to your doctor or a social worker to investigate what transport costs may be covered under healthcare arrangements. When the Prefecture contacts you for an appointment, let them know about your mobility issues to find out what support may be possible. Prefectures can make some exceptions if someone is truly unable to attend an appointment.

## 10. Once I have my new residency permit, how long does it last for? Am I able to leave the country and how long for?

In general, if you have lived in France for less than five years, you will receive a residency permit valid for five years. With this permit, you can be absent from France for up to six months (or longer in exceptional circumstances) and retain your residency rights upon return. This will allow you to build up to the five years needed for permanent residency status. However, if you have recently moved to France as a jobseeker and have never worked in France before, you may be issued with a shorter-term residency permit.

Once you have five or more years' residency in France, you will have the right to permanent residency and therefore be entitled to a 10-year renewable residency permit. In this case, you can be away from the country for up to five years without losing your residency rights. You can find more information in our Living in France Guide.

## DOING BUSINESS IN FRANCE?

Do you have a business in France that interacts with the UK? Want to make sure you are ready for a smooth transition at the end of December?

Whether or not a trade deal is agreed between the UK and the EU, businesses on both sides of the Channel will need to prepare for a new set of norms and a new trading relationship.

Sign up [here](#) to our weekly newsflash for practical info and tips to make sure you are ready to [#KeepBusinessMoving](#) this newsflash is aimed at a France based/French speaking business audience and will provide practical guidance on what companies need to do to ensure they are ready for the end of the transition period. We will cover topics ranging from goods and services, to customs, documentation, terms of employment and more.



## WHAT ABOUT VAT?

We know that some of you operate small businesses in France and have been asking questions regarding selling to the UK and what this means for VAT. We've gathered some information for you here, but please do follow the links below for more detailed and technical support.

From 23h00 UK time/00h00 CET on 31 December 2020, UK supply VAT will be due at the point of sale on consignments of goods that are outside of Great Britain (e.g in France) and that are sold directly to customers (not through an online marketplace) in Great Britain with a value of £135 or less. Please be aware guidance for goods sold to Northern Ireland will be published later.

You (the seller) must charge and account for VAT at the point of sale, unless the consignment is a business to business sale and the customer has given you their UK VAT registration number.

To charge and account for VAT you will need to:

- know the precise nature of the goods to find out the correct rate of VAT to
- charge
- register for VAT –N.B sellers that are already registered for VAT do not need
- to re-register
- keep records of the goods sold

The £135 limit applies to the value of a total consignment, not the separate values of individual items that are in a consignment. For consignments valued at more than £135 normal VAT and customs rules will apply on importation of the goods. You can read the VAT Notice 702 to find out more about how imported goods are treated for VAT purposes. If you are selling to the UK through an online market place, the online marketplace will be liable for VAT. You can find more information on the rules that will apply to online market places [here](#).

For further information, including on how to charge and account for VAT, you can follow [this link](#).

## DRIVING LICENCES

We are pleased to share some updates on driving licences, a topic that we know is causing some frustration and anxiety.

It has recently been confirmed that UK driving licences will continue to be recognised in France until 31 December 2021. The rules for exchanging your licence during 2021 or afterwards have not yet been confirmed. Before 31 December 2020, Brits who are resident in France for at least 185 days per year can apply to exchange their UK licence using the ANTS online platform if they wish to do so. For more information, please refer to the [Living in France Guide](#).

There is also good news for people who plan to visit France from January 2021 – UK licences will be recognised without any additional documentation. That means that there is no requirement for an International Driving Permit. You should, however, carry proof of insurance with you, which can be obtained from your provider.

We know that some of you who previously applied to exchange your licence have experienced delays. A high volume of applications in 2019 caused a significant backlog in the French system. Although they have updated their processes there are still unfortunately some cases that are taking a bit longer to process and we are working with CERT to resolve urgent cases of which we are aware. We are not in a position to provide answers to individual cases but for urgent situations, e.g., if your UK licence and attestation have expired and you are unable to contact CERT, you can contact us through our [webform](#).





# EHIC/S1

We recently sent all UK S1 holders a letter about applying for a new EHIC card. We have had a number of enquiries about this letter.

As the UK government does not keep a register of UK nationals living overseas, letters were sent to all recipients of a UK state pension or benefit who live in France, using a database held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), including non-UK nationals.

1. If you currently receive a UK state pension, you will continue to receive it and do not need to take any action. If you get another UK benefit, you will continue to receive it as long as you meet the eligibility criteria.

2. If you do not receive a UK state pension or benefit, and believe you therefore received a letter in error, please contact the International Pension Centre to report this using the contact details below.

3. As a French, dual or other EU national living in France, only a few of the actions set out in the letter may apply to you:

- Healthcare: if you receive a UK state pension and the UK pays for your healthcare in France through the S1 form, you can apply for a new UK-issued European Health Insurance Card for travel in Europe. Further information is available from [www.nhs.uk/EHIC](http://www.nhs.uk/EHIC) or by calling the Overseas Healthcare Team on 0044 191 218 1999.

- Driving licence: if you drive using a UK driving licence, you can continue to do this until 31 December 2021.

- Residency: if you have questions about dual nationality and applying for a Withdrawal Agreement residency permit, see our Top Ten Questions (above).

4. The letter you received is not a request for a life certificate. If you enclosed documents with your letter, we will be returning these to you as we are not able to process them at the British Embassy.

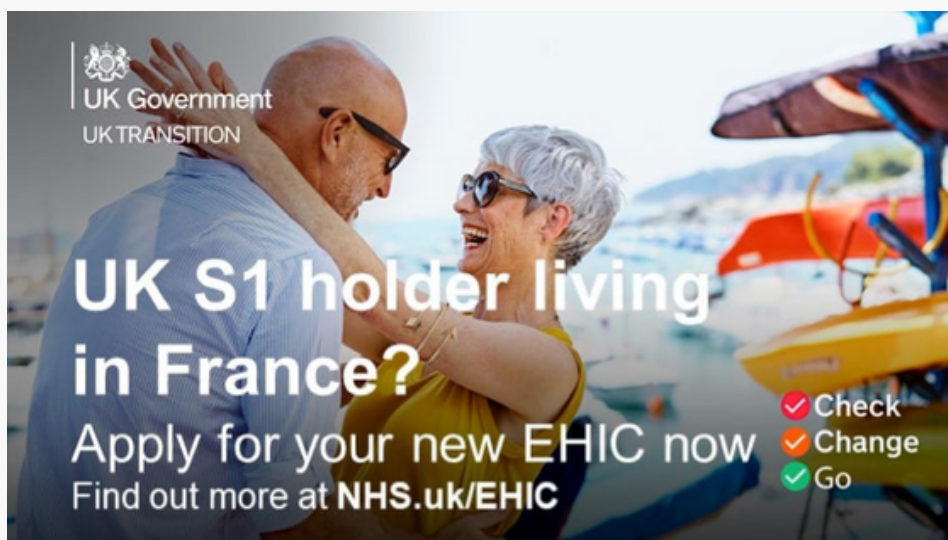
If you have further questions or concerns regarding your UK state pension or benefit, you have changed address or your name/surname are incorrect, or you did not receive a copy of this letter and believe that you should have, please contact the International Pension Centre using the following details:

Online: [www.gov.uk/international-pension-centre](http://www.gov.uk/international-pension-centre)

Telephone: +44 (0) 191 218 7777

The Pension Service 11 / Mail Handling Site A  
Wolverhampton WV98 1LW  
United Kingdom

Please also contact the Pension Service direct if you have further questions on the content of this letter.



# USEFUL LINKS TO ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE OR SUPPORT:

Please visit the webpages below for more information. The links and contact details can signpost you in the right direction and also connect you to those who can provide support or offer help with technical matters if you need it.

Key websites:

- Living in France Guide: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-france>
- France Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france>
- Sign up to the Business Newsflash: [bit.ly/WeeklyNewsflash](http://bit.ly/WeeklyNewsflash)
- French government website: [www.brexit.gouv](http://www.brexit.gouv)

If you use social media, do also consider following us on Facebook @ukinfrance and on Twitter @BritishinFrance.

## UK NATIONALS SUPPORT FUND

In France, [four British Government funded organisations](#) can help UK nationals secure their residency rights. They provide practical support to individuals finding it harder to complete applications, including pensioners, disabled people, those living in remote areas or who have mobility difficulties, and those who face language barriers or barriers in accessing technology.

[IOM - The International Organisation for Migration \(Brittany, Normandy, Ile de France, Hauts-de-France, and Pays de la Loire\)](#)

Visit the [IOM website](#)

Email: [UKnationalsFR@iom.int](mailto:UKnationalsFR@iom.int)

Hotline: 08 09 54 98 32 available during the following hours:

Mon - Tues 2pm to 4pm and Wed - Thurs 10.30am to 12.30pm

[FBN - The Franco-British Network \(Dordogne, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes\)](#)

Visit the [FBN website](#)

Email: [The Franco-British Network](#)

Hotline: 05 19 88 01 09 available during the following hours:

Mon, Tues and Wed, 9am to 1pm; Thurs and Fri 1pm to 5pm

[Church of England - Diocese in Europe \(Nouvelle Aquitaine, Occitanie, Grand Est, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Centre-Val de Loire, Corsica\)](#)

Visit the [Diocese in Europe Residency Support Project website](#)

Hotline: 05 32 80 00 05 available during the following hours:

Mon - Fri 9:30am to 12:00pm and 1:30pm to 4pm;

Tues 5.30pm to 8pm; Sat: 9:30am to 12:00pm

[SSAFA, The Armed Forces Charity \(veterans across France\)](#)

Visit the [SSAFA website](#)

Email: [ukvie.support@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:ukvie.support@ssafa.org.uk)

Hotline: 08 05 11 96 17