



British Embassy
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CITIZENS' RIGHTS NEWSLETTER

A monthly update for UK nationals resident in Belgium under the Withdrawal Agreement

This month, we are looking at **social security coordination** under the Withdrawal Agreement, zooming in on **pensions**.

Welcome to those who just signed up!
You can find previous editions of our newsletter [here](#).

What does the Withdrawal Agreement say about social security coordination?

Under the Withdrawal Agreement, the EU's social security coordination rules, including the aggregation of social security contributions, continue to apply in full to UK nationals living and/or working in Belgium and the EU (and EU citizens living and/or working in the UK) by 1 January 2021, for as long as they remain in scope.

This includes ensuring that workers (and employers) only pay into **one** social security system at a time.

The UK and the EU also agreed provisions that protect certain individuals who are not in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement. For example, a UK national who, although not living in the EU on 31 December 2020, paid social security contributions in an EU Member State **in the past**. The rights that flow from those contributions, such as state pension rights and any reciprocal healthcare entitlements, are **protected**.

What if I move back to the UK, and am therefore no longer in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement as I'm not resident in Belgium anymore?

If you move back to the UK and fall out of full scope of the Withdrawal Agreement, your past social security contributions made in one or more EU Member States will be **protected** under the WA. This applies to contributions made both before and after 1 January 2021. You will be able to rely on these contributions, if needed, when calculating entitlements to contributory benefits, including state pension entitlements.

Under EU rules, I could receive state pensions from more than one EU Member State. Does this continue?

Yes. Member States are required to take into account **all** contributions paid into their respective social security systems by UK nationals in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement, whether made before or after 1 January 2021. As was the case before, the amount of state pension to which you are entitled to as a result of your contributions will be determined according to each state's social security legislation.

If you need to get in touch with the **Belgian Pension Office** (*Service Fédéral des Pensions* or *Federale Pensioendienst*), contact details can be found [here](#) (French) or [here](#) (Flemish).

Important Facts about your UK State Pension

You can carry on receiving your UK state pension if you live in Belgium, and you can still claim your UK state pension in the future if you are not yet in receipt of it.

Your UK state pension will continue to be **'uprated'** as long as you live in the EU, so will be increased each year in line with the rate paid in the UK.

If you plan to claim your UK state pension in the future, you can count relevant social security contributions made in other EU Member States to meet the qualifying conditions for a UK state pension (e.g. length of time worked).

Reciprocal Healthcare

Certain rights flow from your social security contributions, such as state pension rights and reciprocal healthcare entitlements. Check our [February newsletter](#) for more information on healthcare.

Evidence Retention



SETTLED IN BELGIUM?

NEW RULES NOW APPLY FOR UK BENEFIT CLAIMS

Check which documents you may need for future claims.

IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION. FIND OUT MORE AT [GOV.UK/EVIDENCE-EU-BENEFITS](#)



You may be asked to send evidence to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in the UK to prove that you were living in Belgium before 31 December 2020 if:

- ▶ you make a new claim for certain benefits
- ▶ you report a change in your circumstances, e.g. a move to a new country

This evidence includes a copy of your residence document issued before 31 December 2020, so your Belgian E or E+ card for example.

If you do not have this, copies of other official documents which confirm your home address could be accepted, such as a bank statement, a rent or mortgage statement or utility bills.

For more information, have a look at DWP's guidance by clicking [here](#).

International Pension Centre

If you are in receipt of a UK benefit or the UK state pension, remember to report any changes in your personal details, such as an address change or new bank details, to the International Pension Centre by **telephone or letter**.

Telephone

+44 (0) 191 218 7777

Post

The Pension Service 11
Mail Handling Site A
Wolverhampton
WV98 1LW, UK

If you have any queries, you can also contact them using their [online enquiry form](#).

◆ NEWS UPDATE ◆

'M' card / 'F' card

M card = Withdrawal Agreement (WA) residence card in Belgium

F card = residence card for Third-Country Nationals who are family members of an EU national

A few UK nationals reported that they were offered the F card when they went into their Commune/Gemeente to apply for their M card. This will only happen to a small group of UK nationals in Belgium, who perhaps came to Belgium with a Belgian or EU spouse under EU family reunification rules.

Although you may be eligible for the F card, you should **also** be eligible to apply for the new M card in your own right under the Withdrawal Agreement. In order to prove that you were legally resident in Belgium before 31 December 2020 and exercising your Free Movement rights, you may need to provide additional documents, such as a job contract. It may be administratively less burdensome to apply for the F card, but this card does not clearly demonstrate your rights under the Withdrawal Agreement.

You should always be given the option by your Commune/Gemeente and have the withdrawal cards for clarification or escalated to you.

Speak with your municipality for eligibility or escalate it to the [Federal Ombudsman](#) or [Your Europe](#) if you don't feel like you were given the option to apply for the M card.

March Embassy Activity

The Bulletin

This week, HMA Martin Shearman answered your questions on citizens' rights in The Bulletin. Have a read by clicking [here](#).

Facebook Q&A

We only received 4 questions!

The Belgian authorities are still experiencing a delay in the manufacture of the new M residence cards. You can still submit an application, and your Commune/Gemeente will get in touch with you when your card is ready.

If you would like to see all the questions received at this month's Facebook Q&A, please click [here](#) (no Facebook account needed).

Upcoming Embassy Events

7 April 2021 from 18:00 to 20:00

Q&A Session on British Embassy Brussels [Facebook Page](#)

Tell a Friend

If you know any UK nationals living in Belgium who would benefit from receiving these newsletters, please do not hesitate to spread the word! They can sign up to receive the newsletter by [sending a blank email using this link](#).

Stay in Touch



Find the latest information on our [Living in Belgium guide](#)

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