

# GMS Flash Alert

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## United Kingdom – New Online Applications, Passport Service for EEA/Swiss Nationals

Following the U.K.'s vote to leave the European Union (EU) in June 2016<sup>1</sup> – the so-called “Brexit” – the U.K. government has improved the application processes for many EU nationals who wish to regularise their stay in the U.K., making online application forms available to them, as well as introducing a passport return service.<sup>2</sup> A new online application process for partners of British nationals or those settled in the U.K. who wish to remain in the U.K. has also been launched.<sup>3</sup>

### WHY THIS MATTERS

#### EU Nationals

Until now applications for EU nationals have been difficult, with lengthy and complicated paper forms, as well as processing times of up to six months during which the applicants were without their passports or ID cards. The new processes aims to significantly simplify obtaining residence documents, as well as allow many EU nationals to retain their original passports or ID cards during the application process.

#### Partners of British Nationals or Those Settled in the United Kingdom

Equally, partners of British nationals and those who are settled in the U.K. applying to remain in the U.K. had to complete comprehensive paper application forms consisting of over 60 pages in order to come to and stay in the United Kingdom. The new online forms have streamlined this process, making the forms more user-friendly and quicker to complete.

Forms that benefit from the new online processes are:

EEA (Qualified Persons – QP)	FLR (M)
EEA (Permanent Residence - PR)	FLR (FP)

## Context

There are currently approximately 3.5 million EU nationals in the U.K., many of whom will also have EU family members. Many may wish to reduce uncertainty regarding their stay in the U.K. post-Brexit, and therefore may want to apply for official documents that may allow them to stay in the U.K. long term. The U.K. government has recognised that it will need to update its processes in order to cope with the numbers of EU nationals who may apply, and has moved to an online application process for certain applicants.

### New EU National Application Process

Applicants (with the exception of certain students and self-sufficient EU nationals, and family members of EU nationals) can apply at <https://www.gov.uk/eea-registration-certificate/overview> for a Registration Certificate, if they have been in the U.K. for less than five years, or a Document Certifying Permanent Residence, if they have been in the U.K. for five years or more. Applicants will still need to submit supporting documents to the U.K. authorities after submitting their application online. They will then need to decide whether to post their application to the U.K. authorities, or utilise the European passport return service<sup>4</sup>.

The European passport return service is provided by local authorities or certain Premium Service Centres. They will photocopy the applicant's passport or ID card and return it to them immediately. They will then forward a copy along with the applicant's application pack to the U.K. authorities. Using the service does not guarantee the outcome of the application and applicants will not be able to ask advice on their specific circumstances. Currently, this service is only available via the online application route for a fee.

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## KPMG NOTE

The improved online application process should be welcomed by EU nationals dealing with the consequences of Brexit. The application process is expected to be improved by having an online form and a passport passback service. Many EU nationals will also now be able to travel in and out of the U.K. while their applications are being processed. This will benefit employers as well, since it will mitigate disruptions to their business and reduce delays to the timely execution of their overseas business strategy.

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## Background for Partners of U.K. Nationals/U.K. Residents

Applications to remain in the U.K. as the partner of a British national or a person settled in the U.K. are complex and document-heavy. The paper application forms are difficult to navigate as different parts need to be filled in by different applicants depending on their specific circumstances.

### New Online Application Form FLR (M) and FLR (FP)

The new online application forms will only ask those questions that are relevant to a particular applicant based on his or her answers along the way, which will significantly reduce the time it will take to complete them. They can be found at <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/family-routes>. Applicants will still need to submit supporting documents to the U.K. authorities after submitting their application online. They will then need to decide whether to post their application to the U.K. authorities, or utilise the fast track route via a Premium Service Centre.

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## KPMG NOTE

### Upshot of Improved System for Extending Stay

While these types of applications (as mentioned just above) are not as common as other visa types that have been available online for some time (such as applications under Tier 2 of the U.K. Points-Based System), the improvement may nevertheless reduce the stress many applicants could feel when extending their stay in the U.K. under this category.

### Future Prospects?

It is hoped that the new online applications will eventually be extended to all EU applicants, and other U.K. visa categories.

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## FOOTNOTES:

1 For prior coverage of Brexit and the impact on migration to/from the U.K., see the following issues of *GMS Flash Alert*: [2016-073](#) (27 June 2016) and [2016-070](#) (22 June 2016).

2 There has been no formal announcement of the digitising of online application processes for EU nationals who wish to regularise their stay in the U.K.; however, this development has been brought to the attention of KPMG LLP (U.K.), who has reached out to the Home Office to obtain additional information. Furthermore, this has come to the public's attention in light of some reports in the press about the piloting by the Home Office of an online application system to potentially replace the current paper-based system.

3 Although there has been no formal announcement regarding FLR forms going online, the information has been made available very recently for applicants on the Home Office's "[Apply to Remain in the UK with Family](#)" webpage.

4 For more on the European passport return service, see "[European Passport Return Service](#)" from UK Visas and Immigration (21 September 2016, updated 1 October 2016).

## Contact us

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*\* Please note the KPMG International member firm in the United States does not provide immigration services.*

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