



Brexit preparedness: European Commission proposes visa-free travel to the EU for UK nationals in a no deal scenario – if the UK also grants reciprocal visa-free travel to all EU citizens

Strasbourg, 13 November 2018

The European Commission has today proposed to grant UK citizens visa-free travel to the EU after the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

It would mean that UK citizens would not need a visa when travelling to the Schengen area for short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period. In the scenario where the UK leaves the EU without a deal, this would apply as of 30 March 2019. If a deal is reached, however, it would apply as of the end of the transition period, as outlined in the Withdrawal Agreement. This follows the Commission's continued commitment that citizens' rights must come first in the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

This proposal is entirely conditional upon the UK also granting reciprocal and non-discriminatory visa-free travel for all EU Member States, in line with the principle of visa reciprocity. The UK government has declared its intention not to require a visa from citizens of the EU27 Member States for short stays for the purposes of tourism and business. EU rules on non-EU nationals travelling to the EU, such as those on border control, would of course apply to UK citizens once they are no longer EU citizens.

Today's proposal is one of the preparedness measures needed as a consequence of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. It is separate to the ongoing negotiations on the UK's orderly withdrawal.

Next steps

The proposal now needs to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. The Commission calls on both institutions to make quick progress on this proposal so that it can be adopted in good time before 30 March 2019.

Background

On 29 March 2017, the United Kingdom notified the European Council of its intention to withdraw from the European Union pursuant to Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. This means that, unless a ratified withdrawal agreement establishes another date, all Union primary and secondary law will cease to apply to the United Kingdom from 30 March 2019, 00:00h (CET). The United Kingdom will then become a 'third country'.

The EU has a common visa policy for short-stay visits to the Schengen area, which includes a common list of countries whose nationals must have a visa when crossing the external borders and a common list of countries whose nationals are exempt from that requirement. These lists are set out in [Regulation No 539/2001](#) and its successive amendments.

For UK nationals, once EU law no longer applies to the United Kingdom, visa-free travel will be possible in the 22 EU countries which are members of the Schengen area and in the 4 Schengen-associated States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). It will also apply to Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Cyprus which are not yet full members of the Schengen area.

Today's proposal concerns United Kingdom nationals who are British citizens. Under UK law, there are six categories of British nationals, British citizens being one of them. The other five categories, namely British nationals (Overseas), British overseas territories citizens (BOTC), British overseas citizens (BOC), British protected persons (BPP) and British subjects (BS), are not EU citizens but already benefit from visa-free travel to the Schengen area and will continue to do so. British nationals residing in Gibraltar will continue being able to enter the Schengen area without a visa.

For More Information

- [Proposal for a Regulation amending Council Regulation 539/2001](#) as regards the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union
- [Commission Communication](#) - Preparing for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the

European Union on 30 March 2019, 19 July 2018

- The European Commission's Brexit Preparedness [website](#) (including "[Brexit preparedness notices](#)")
- [EU visa policy](#)

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