

# The British in Europe – and Vice Versa

---

European Union: MW 354

€

## Summary

1. There are around 1.2 million British born people living in another EU country, according to figures provided by the UN. Around 800,000 will be workers and their dependants. This is much less than the estimated 3.3 million people born in another EU country who now live in the UK, of which 2.1 million are working.

## The British in Europe

2. According to the United Nations Population Division, the number of British people living in the EU is 1.2 million<sup>1</sup>. (The largest communities are in Spain – 309,000, Ireland – 255,000, France – 185,000 and Germany – 103,000. See Annex A.)

3. Many of the British emigrants to Europe, especially Ireland, Italy, Germany, Cyprus, France and Spain, are self-sufficient retirees so the numbers in employment are fewer than the total number of residents. The data on the total number of British workers in EU countries is however unavailable since many countries do not collect this. We do know that there are around 400,000 pensioners in receipt of a DWP pension living in Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Germany and we can therefore assume that these people are not working<sup>2</sup>. From this we can estimate that of the 1.2 million British people living in in another EU country, around 800,000 will be workers and their dependants.

4. In 2013/14 the UK spent £1.4 billion on state pension payments to recipients living elsewhere in the European Union<sup>3</sup>.

---

1 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>

2 In Ireland 52% or 131,140 of British born residents are in receipt of a UK state pension as are 38,050 or 53% of British born residents in Italy. In Cyprus the number of British in receipt of a pension is 43%, in Germany 42%, In France 35%, in Spain 28%, in the Netherlands 24% and in Switzerland that figure is 23%. See House of Commons Library, 'Frozen Overseas Pensions', Standard Note 1457, 6 May 2014, URL: <http://frozenbritishpensions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SN01457-8.pdf>

3 State pension expenditure by country detail, 2013/14 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/372754/sp-overseas-expenditure-201314.xlsx](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/372754/sp-overseas-expenditure-201314.xlsx)

5. EU partners charge the NHS for the costs of treating British pensioners. In 2013/14 the UK paid £580 million to other EEA countries for the treatment of British pensioners resident in the EEA while it received just £12 million from other EEA countries in the same year for the treatment of EEA pensioners in the UK<sup>4</sup>.

## European Union citizens in the UK

6. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force Survey estimates for 2015, there are 3.3 million EU citizens in the UK – 1.6 million from the EU14, 1.3 million from the EU8, 300,000 from Romania and Bulgaria and the remainder from the other EU countries of Malta, Cyprus and Croatia<sup>5</sup>.

7. The ONS Labour market statistics estimate that of the EU born migrants in the UK, 2.1 million were working<sup>6</sup>.

## What would happen to UK citizens living in the EU – and EU citizens living in the UK – should British voters choose to leave the European Union?

8. The government's paper 'The Process for Withdrawing from the European Union' argues that British citizens in the EU should not assume that rights acquired under free movement rules 'would be guaranteed' if the UK were to vote to leave the EU. However, in such a circumstance, international law would guarantee the rights of Britons living and working in EU member states. Under a principle enshrined by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969, withdrawal from a treaty releases the parties from any future obligations to each other but does not affect any rights or obligations acquired under it before withdrawal. This is backed up by research conducted by the House of Commons Library<sup>7</sup>.

9. In addition, any action to remove British citizens currently in EU member states would directly contravene Article 19 of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, under which collective expulsions are prohibited.<sup>8</sup> The collective expulsion of foreigners is also forbidden under protocol four of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article four of which reads: "Collective expulsion of aliens is prohibited."<sup>9</sup>

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016

---

4 Parliamentary Question (HL3430) Lord Laird, 16 December 2014, Hansard WA61-63, URL: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldhansrd/text/141216w0001.htm>

5 Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey, population by country of birth, Q4 2015

6 Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Statistics, employment by country of birth, Table EMP06 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbycountryofbirthandnationalityemp06>

7 House of Commons Library, Leaving the EU, Research paper 13/42, July 2013, page 15 <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP13-42/RP13-42.pdf>

8 Title II, Article 19, Charter of Fundamental Rights, URL: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

9 Protocol No. 4, Article 4, European Convention on Human Rights, p.35. URL: [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

## Annex A: EU born residents in the UK and British born residents in the EU in 2015<sup>10</sup>

EU Born in the UK		UK born in the EU
26,000	AUSTRIA	11,000
32,000	BELGIUM	27,000
77,000	BULGARIA	5,000
6,000	CROATIA	500
31,000	CYPRUS	41,000
42,000	CZECHREPUBLIC	5,000
24,000	DENMARK	19,000
18,000	ESTONIA	500
7,000	FINLAND	7,000
176,000	FRANCE	185,000
297,000	GERMANY	103,000
72,000	GREECE	18,000
87,000	HUNGARY	7,000
411,000	IRELAND	255,000
204,000	ITALY	65,000
96,000	LATVIA	1,000
147,000	LITHUANIA	3,000
1,000	LUXEMBOURG	7,000
20,000	MALTA	12,000
79,000	NETHERLANDS	50,000
883,000	POLAND	35,000
132,000	PORTUGAL	18,000
229,000	ROMANIA	3,000
63,000	SLOVAKIA	5,000
1,000	SLOVENIA	500
35,000	SWEDEN	25,000
129,000	SPAIN	309,000
<b>3,325,000</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,217,500</b>

10 The United Kingdom Office for National Statistics was considered likely to be more accurate than the UN estimate for the number of EU born migrants living in the UK of 2.883 million in 2015. This is because the methodology used by the UN was based on a growth rate taken from past UK census returns. This method may not have picked up the recent increase in the rate of EU migration evidenced in the UK international passenger survey. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 1000 for figures greater than 1000 and to the nearest 500 for figures under a 1000.

## Annex B: Which figure is the correct one to use for Brits in the EU?

1. The UN figure of 1.2 million contrasts with the government's preference for using a larger figure of two million. For instance, the government paper 'The Process for Withdrawing from the European Union', published on 29th February, (pp. 17 & 22) states that there are two million UK citizens who live and work in the EU<sup>11</sup>. This figure was also given in a parliamentary answer by Baroness Warsi to Lord Oakeshott in February 2014<sup>12</sup>. The figure of two million looks to be an overestimate. It comes from a 2010 report by the Institute for Public Policy Research entitled 'Global Brit'<sup>13</sup>. In estimating how many British people were living in Spain and France the think tank multiplied the official figures by four to obtain their results. This appears from the report to have been *on the basis of anecdotal information about one area of Spain from a singular consular official*. The discrepancy may also result from different approaches being used to count those who spend only part of their time in the EU. The House of Commons Library, however, uses the lower estimate<sup>14</sup>.

---

11 HM Government, The process for withdrawing from the European Union, February 2016 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/503908/54538\\_EU\\_Series\\_No2\\_Accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/503908/54538_EU_Series_No2_Accessible.pdf)

12 HC Debate, 4 Feb 2014, cW <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/140204w0001.htm#14020484000666>

13 IPPR, Global Brit, 2010 [http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/global-brit\\_2010.pdf?noredirect=1](http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/pdf/global-brit_2010.pdf?noredirect=1)

14 House of Commons Library, Leaving the EU: How might people currently exercising free movement rights be affected? <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7525>