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Brexit: Practical advice

ESTABLISHING A 'PAPERWORK FOOTPRINT'

Brexit – the word on everyone's lips – the word causing so much concern for British expats living in France or wishing to make their future in France. What should British citizens in France do to prepare to stay in France? What will be the impact of a no-deal situation? Daily updates from the media are often confusing, frustrating, worrying and at times overwhelming.

Articles abound with possible impacts, many of which we have, even now, no comprehensive or thorough picture of. Through all this uncertainty, I recommend you extract yourself from the 'what if' scenario and start working on the practical and tangible aspects of preparing your future life in France. At the end of the day, whatever the result of this political divorce, your paperwork will be ready!

How will a Deal or No Deal Brexit affect your paperwork?

Whether a deal is signed or not, your paperwork will still need to be organized and given to your prefecture. The types of paperwork you will need may be slightly affected in the case of a no deal, particularly from a resources perspective; and the process may be a little more stressful as the timeframes will be limited. Without a deal, there will be a grace period of three months to one year for to submit paperwork for the appropriate residency card.

Having a deal would facilitate your applications as there will be a longer transition period to request new or modify existing residency cards. Ensuring you have a good paperwork footprint in France can only enhance your chances of making this process smoother. Bear in mind that residency permits for non-Europeans have always had a cost, so this will likely be the case for British Expats once they are no longer considered European. We are still waiting to find out what this cost will be.

No matter how long you have been living in France, from a few months to a few years, you must establish your 'paperwork footprint.' So just what paperwork do we need and how can we prepare for the worst, whilst hoping for the best?

For newcomers

If you are just starting out in France, it's important that you establish that you are not going to be a burden to the French state. You should apply for a Residency Permit before the Brexit date, but if this is not possible, start your paperwork footprints straight away by following the steps below.

The idea here is not to decide which card to apply for but to ensure you have your paperwork in order so that once a clear path has been indicated by French authorities, you are ready with to file:

- Ensure that you have utility bills in your name
- Have your birth certificates & marriage certificates translated
- Have a French bank account with funds
- Get passport photos prepared

- Ensure your passport is not about to expire (i.e. 6 months or less)
- Ensure you have healthcare (private, French or EHIC)

- Documents: If you have not yet paid your income taxes in France, you may wish to make yourself known to your local tax office to request a fiscal number and start paying monthly based on your estimated income. If you are already paying tax in France, make copies of your income tax, tenant's tax (habitation) and owner's tax (foncière), if applicable.



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Decide which category you are going to fall into so that you can prepare the paperwork footprints you need for that category: Retired (receiving a pension); early retiree/long stay visitor (living on investments, savings); worker (salaried person in France); or business owner (Auto Entrepreneur & other business structure).

For those already settled

If you already have a European Residency Permit (Carte de Séjour Européenne), this will need to be altered to a non-European card at some stage in the near future. When to change it will be largely dependent upon whether a deal is reached or not. The advantage of having this card is that you will have already proved your financial status so future paperwork will be easier. The process for the modification of this permit has not yet been specified. If you do not already have a European Residency Permit, you will need to provide a complete list of paperwork, including financial, in relation to your situation in France (retired, worker, business owner etc.) in order to apply for the appropriate non-European residency permit. The French Government has assured that in the case of a no-deal Brexit, there will be a grace period of 3 months to 1 year for British residents to submit their files to the prefecture. We still have no information on what the actual process will entail, although one can imagine a visit to the prefecture is the logical answer! So once again, start preparing your file, don't wait.

If you have been in France for more than five years and you do NOT already possess a permanent European residency card, even in the case of a no deal Brexit, you will be given the opportunity to apply for a long stay residency permit. However, you will need to provide all the documents as listed above, particularly proving your resources related to your situation and ensuring that you are not a burden on the French state. If you have been in France for more than 5 years and you have a permanent European residency card, you will be able to obtain the equivalent permit. The modification will be simpler because you have already proven your financial situation and your current card will be valid during the transition period.



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