

12 January 2021

Kemi Badenoch MP  
Minister of State for Levelling Up & Equalities

Dear Kemi Badenoch MP,

### **Elections Bill and voter registration of post-Brexit EU, EEA, and Swiss citizens**

Congratulations on being appointed to oversee the implementation of the Elections Bill. the3million's Young Europeans Network have expressed relief that the voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens who entered the UK before 2021 and have secured rights under the EU Settlement Scheme will be maintained through the Bill.

However, we also have concerns about the effects of the Bill as well as proposals for alternatives to extend the franchise in the UK.

Firstly, as you know, current rules state that all EU citizens can register and vote in local elections. The Young Europeans Network is proud to have run voter registration drives in the past few years encouraging EU citizens to exercise their democratic right. Under the Bill's proposals, the voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens who entered the UK before 2021 and have secured their rights under the EU Settlement Scheme will be automatically maintained. Those EU citizens who enter the UK from 2021 onwards, for example under the new Immigration System, will depend on their country of EU citizenship having a bilateral voting rights agreement with the UK - currently only secured with Poland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain.

Since the 1st of January 2021, many EU citizens have entered the UK under the New Immigration System or as joining family members. As it stands, these citizens can register to vote and vote in any local election. For example, a Romanian student who entered the UK in September 2021 with a student visa to study in an English University can be added to the electoral register.

Given that the Elections Bill has not yet received royal assent, we are concerned that certain EU, EEA, and Swiss citizens who began their residency in the UK in 2021 before the rules of the Elections Bill are implemented will have registered to vote and will subsequently have to be removed from the electoral register.

To that end, we would greatly appreciate some clarification from you:

- What will happen to the voting and candidacy rights of EU, EEA, and Swiss citizens who entered the UK from 2021 onwards, and are not covered by a

bilateral voting rights agreement who register to vote before the Elections Bill receives royal assent?

- If their democratic right is removed by the Elections Bill, will the said groups be notified, and how?
- At the next local election, how will it be ensured that Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Luxembourgish citizens and any other citizen who benefits from a bilateral voting rights agreement with the UK be able to vote given the complexity of voter eligibility?
- In the lead up to the next set of local elections carried out under the rules implemented by the Elections Act, how will the Government ensure that election officials and poll workers are correctly informed about which groups are (still) eligible to vote?

As the above questions demonstrate, the Elections Bill will bring a set of further complexities into voter eligibility. As a simpler alternative, we would like to ask you to consider our campaign to introduce voting rights based on residency across the whole UK, allowing everyone who lawfully resides in the UK to vote in local elections regardless of citizenship.

All members of a community use the same services and amenities funded and maintained by local authorities, therefore it is unfair and unjust that certain community members are excluded from decisions about how money should be spent in their area. This has been recognised in Scotland and Wales, where residence-based voting rights already operate to the benefit of Welsh and Scottish communities.

We believe that such a change at the national level will erase barriers to political participation amongst underrepresented groups, in turn improving community cohesion and integration. We also believe that all parties stand to gain from nationally implemented residence-based voting rights; after all there is no such thing as too much democracy. We have a campaign website ([ourhomeourvote.co.uk](http://ourhomeourvote.co.uk)) and [briefing papers](#) to pass on if they would be of interest to you.

We hope to hear from you as soon as possible. Many EU citizens as well as local councillors have written to us with these same questions. We wish to provide the correct information.

Many thanks for your time and help,

Lara Parizotto  
Co-Manager  
Young Europeans Network