

**[READ REPORT](#)**

**RIFT REPORT SOUNDS ALARM BELL FOR BREXIT BRITISH IN FRANCE**

- RIFT, the largest organisation of British citizens in France, today publishes a report on the likely impact of the Withdrawal Agreement on British citizens in France
- Report warns of a potential humanitarian emergency if the French government applies residency criteria strictly
- British citizens of modest means most vulnerable and living today in fear for their future
- Dominant worry is potential failure to pass minimum income criteria for compulsory Residency Cards to be introduced via a new online application system due for launch in July
- RIFT calls for a declaratory system of directly conferred rights rather than the constitutive system likely to be introduced whereby British citizens will have to apply for their right to residency

In February 2020, as part of its ongoing monitoring of its 17,000+ members, RIFT asked them, under guarantee of anonymity, to contact RIFT with their concerns in relation to free movement. In one week nearly 200 of our members responded, providing more than 600 comments. These comments form the basis of the RIFT report published today.

Nobody has any clear idea of how many British citizens are resident in France. The fact that current estimates vary from 150,000 to 400,000 is an indication of the lack of basic information.

This lack of registration has now resulted in many UK residents fearing that they may not meet the requirements in order to remain in France if the Withdrawal Agreement (WA) is rigidly applied by the French Government.

Many believe that they could face deportation and may not be able to continue to live with their family. That is how bad the situation is today.

And, in the background, there has been poor communication on how citizens should correctly exercise their treaty rights for almost two decades.

As highlighted in sometimes dramatic narrative detail in the report, many RIFT members and their friends and family may not qualify for residency under the Withdrawal Agreement due to issues such as inadequate income, local administration problems and studying abroad. Others fear for their future due to a lack of communication on issues such as disability rights.

This report is truly shocking as we could be looking at a potential humanitarian emergency in France.

As well as the nitty-gritty and sometimes harrowing detail that underpins the RIFT report, we offer our recommendations on how to help avoid this potential crisis. All our recommendations are firmly based on the written concerns of our members as expressed to us very recently indeed.

Should France persist with a constitutive system, as appears likely, RIFT would make the following recommendations:

- 1. No income test and no exclusion of income benefits recipients either previously or potentially regardless of the length of residence.**
- 2. An end to the postcode lottery and removal of decision-making powers from Préfectures. A centralised system that is easy to use and locally mobile units available to reach the vulnerable who cannot use the internet.**
- 3. Children studying abroad (after in many cases having primary and secondary education in France) should be allowed to obtain and retain, throughout their course, their rights to be with their family even if no longer financially dependent when they return. DCEMs for children of WA parents should also be through the new system.**
- 4. A system established quickly to stop British people being refused employment and communication on this matter from the French Government to employers**
- 5. Clarity for those with disabilities and their carers**
- 6. Continued WA rights for our lifetime (lifetime right to return for permanent residents) which is within the gift of the French Government. Permanent cards to be truly permanent.**
- 7. A replacement service for SOLVIT rather than relying on each individual to litigate in case of administration errors**
- 8. Card renewals to not retest under more strict criteria. Free renewals.**
- 9. Naturalisation process should be speeded up**

**10. Flexibility for late applicants - including those temporarily outside France at the end of the transition. The rules for those entitled to arrive after the transition (family members) should already be clarified, in terms of what conditions will apply to them, including what evidence of dependency they will need. They should be allowed to accumulate residence rights thereafter.**

RIFT stands ready to work constructively and in a positive way with the French, British and EU authorities, and particularly the French, who hold the future of the British community in France in their hands.

Commenting on the Report the following RIFT members said:

**Andrew Dewar - Acting Chairman RIFT**

“Let there be no doubt about what is driving this report. Because of Brexit and the policies of successive Conservative governments in the UK over the last decade, British residents in France find themselves in a desperate situation”

“Our members worry and live in fear of what the future holds for them. They came to France to live their dream of a better life for themselves and their family within the European Union. Brexit and its consequences now threaten that dream. And for many, they have nothing in the UK to go back to, their home is here in France.”

“The recent declaration by President Macron that he would protect and defend the British in France is genuinely appreciated. This report is aimed at helping the French government make a success of integrating the British residents in France, it is a warning of the potential pitfalls ahead”.

“RIFT will work constructively with all responsible parties to ensure a successful outcome. It is in this spirit that we have published today’s report. We have to succeed, all of us together, failure is not an option”

**Mike Harlow - Co-Author and RIFT Administrator**

“This report shows that there is a huge concern for a number of UK citizens living in France. With the continued vacuum of information from either authorities there is a certain amount of panic amongst people fearing that their long-held dream of living in France will be dashed on the rocks of Brexit.”

“We are asking the relevant authorities to work with us in order to educate, support and protect those that have chosen France as their adopted home.”

**Justine Wallington - Co-Author and RIFT Administrator**

“Our members’ vividly expressed fears and concerns in this report show just how urgent it is to stop their uncertainty. They have suffered for over 3 years not knowing if their families can stay together; if they can stay in their homes; if they can have medical care and if their incomes are secure.”

## **ABOUT RIFT**

RIFT was created after the Brexit referendum in the UK in 2016. On a daily basis for nearly four years, the RIFT online community has sought to represent the interests of UK citizens and to protect members' rights to remain in France. We do not want to see UK citizens who exercised their EU right to Freedom of Movement disadvantaged by Brexit and suffering through ignorance of their rights.

Our total membership extends to more than 20,000 individuals and with their family and friends in France we believe we can reach in excess of 100,000 UK residents in France impacted by Brexit.

RIFT has a very active Facebook presence and reaches far more British citizens associated with France than any other similar group.

Our website, [www.remaininfrance.fr](http://www.remaininfrance.fr), gives information about potential outcomes after Brexit and links to articles on topics such as healthcare, children in France and naturalisation along with “bitesizes” for issues.

RIFT is a group that is currently non-funded. It is led by a team comprising: Mike Harlow, Justine Wallington, Anne Berrurier, James Brannan, Julie Hall, Leigh Chandler, Claire Phillips, Alison Wyld, Jacques Fade, Debra Williams and Lucy Ogden. All members of the team are volunteers.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

To contact RIFT

Email : [riftremaininfrance@gmail.com](mailto:riftremaininfrance@gmail.com)

To contact Andrew Dewar, Acting Chairman

Email [andrewdewar@orange.fr](mailto:andrewdewar@orange.fr)

To contact Justine Wallington, Co-Author

RIFT Email (see above)

Tel.: +33 (0)4 68 69 52 37

(NB available from Monday 2nd March to Thursday 5th March 2020 and, as a personal home number, for urgent questions relating to this report only please)

[READ REPORT](#)