

21.06.29

1 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding settled status (OQ.139/2021):

I imagine the Minister is very comfortable with questions at the moment so I will continue that. With the deadline of 30th June 2021 imminent, will the Minister advise how many Islanders it is estimated are yet to apply for E.U. (European Union) settled status, and whether or not 28-day enforcement notices will be issued against any who have not?

Deputy G.C. Guida (The Minister for Home Affairs):

Over 17,000 applications have been made to the Jersey E.U. settlement scheme. There is no precise data available - due to the historic free movement of E.U. nationals - to determine how many people are yet to apply to the scheme. Estimates 3 years ago indicate there may be up to 20,000 E.U. nationals in Jersey. I will divert from my written speech to add that at the last census we counted 13,000 European nationals that had been born outside of Jersey and that could necessitate to the settled status. Only 13,000. added to that 1,300 Irish E.U. nationals, who of course do not need the settled status. So the 20,000 E.U. national estimates that we have been using from the start is an absolute worst-case scenario and I would say that, after having pushed the scheme for more than 2 years, we are very, very likely to have reached pretty much all of the E.U. citizens in the Island. After 30th June 28-day notices will be issued to those individuals who are encountered by officers and can provide some evidence that they are eligible to the settled scheme. Late applications will be considered against reasonable grounds for missing the deadline. Those who fail to subsequently make application to the scheme or whose applications are refused will be liable to removal.

5.1.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I was briefly at the office where applications are processed and there was one gentleman who did not speak superb English who was being turned away because he had not gone on to the website first and he obviously was late. He was just sent away with the words: "Go and look at the website." Can the Minister be sure that those people who are late in the day applying, possibly because their level of English is not great, are being treated in a manner which is aware of the fact they may find it difficult to access websites and use websites? Would he also say whether or not, as with the previous Minister, they will take a very understanding approach to such late or even beyond-the-deadline applications?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Absolutely and I am quite saddened to hear about that incident. From the beginning, we accepted that many of the applicants might not be able to use the internet or speak English very well. We were not only ready to go and look for them but also assist them as much as we could. I will make sure that this follows on. Of course, the other thing is that we do not intend to be harsh or difficult with this, those people are our guests and we want to make sure that they are safe in Jersey.

5.1.2 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

The Minister will be aware that I had a constituency case recently of somebody who had attempted to engage with the settled status scheme and had come across some sort of technical problem that had left her completely unaware of whether her application had been accepted. The Minister was very helpful and helped resolve that particular case. But is he concerned that there could be more people out there who have attempted to engage with the system, have not had it accepted for technical problems, but are not aware that it has not been accepted? Is he able to speak to those

running the system to go through that and ensure that everybody gets contacted if they have attempted an application that has not - for whatever reason - worked through the system?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Absolutely. At this stage we are running through the backlog and processing about 500 applications a week. So the officers are really, really busy processing the easy applications, the ones that have all the documentation with them. After that, we are not going to close the system, we are going to make sure that we catch everybody that went through the hoops and that had a problem. So we are definitely going to continue working after we have done all the easy ones.

5.1.3 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:

Can the Deputy advise the public what they should do if they have not heard within a certain amount of time? I have also been experiencing what Senator Mézec has said and some people are replying to emails and not having any responses back for confirmation that they have been received. So, if the Minister could provide some guidance as to what people should do in that situation?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

The most important thing is that if you qualify and you are late you still qualify. We are not going to do anything to somebody who has lived 10 years on the Island and just had a paperwork or an email issue. So qualified remains qualified. If you are travelling and you are worried, not being officially on the settled status list could be a problem, then yes, you should talk to the Immigration Department. Again, I will make sure that this is possible and that phone calls are answered.

5.1.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:

The Minister mentioned that there would be removals after the 28-day period. Would the Minister please advise when he believes these may start and what funding has been set aside for those removals?

[12:15]

Deputy G.C. Guida:

With luck there should not be any. That is not the goal of the process. When we get to that point, and that is quite a bit in the future, I will make sure that it is possible to do so. But what we really want is impress on people that, if they do qualify, they need to register as soon as possible. I have not seen the budget for this so I do not know what situation it is in. But it is a known issue. We are probably ready for it.