

# The Dark Side of Brexit: European Citizens Being Detained in Migrant Holding Centers in UK

Dozens of EU travelers have been held and deported under Britain's new immigration laws, which are very tough and highly restrictive

By [Rafa de Miguel](#)

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*María will finally be leaving the United Kingdom today, Monday, bound for Valencia, after a nightmare that has lasted two weeks. She still doesn't know when she'll be getting her passport back, but she is taking it for granted that the document will now permanently reflect that she was deported from a European country.*

María is not her real name. She is aged 25, and would rather remain anonymous. Like dozens of other youngsters, she thought that an adventure in the United Kingdom was still possible. But she came crashing down to Earth after falling foul of the [reality of Brexit](#) and the country's new immigration laws, which are very tough and highly restrictive.

On May 3, María was detained on arrival in Gatwick Airport, and was taken to the Yarl's Wood migrant holding center in Bedfordshire. For four days, she received no information about her situation, could not access her personal belongings, and had to live with the suspicion and fear that a Covid-19 outbreak could see her stuck there indefinitely.

"I can't say that I was badly treated," she told EL PAÍS. "Fortunately I had my own room, given the need to isolate us. But I felt very confused, because there was absolutely no information about the situation. As far as I remember, in the canteen, there was a girl from the Czech Republic, an Italian, an American and two South Americans."

The British government and the European Union countries have spent more than two years releasing information about the [rights and situation of European citizens](#) who travel to or work in the United Kingdom, and vice versa. All of those who can prove that they were living in the country six months before Brexit finally became a reality, on December 31, 2020, have the right to apply for EU Pre-Settled Status or EU Settled Status, the temporary or definitive right to remain in the UK and which grants bearers the same rights they enjoyed before the country left the EU.

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*Featured image: A baggage check-in point at Gatwick Airport in the UK. (Source: El Pais)*

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