



Immigration should not be for negotiation

European Union: MW 442

1. The opening up of the UK's post-Brexit immigration policy for negotiation with the EU risks seriously disappointing the public's expectation that Brexit will lead to a sharp reduction in immigration from the EU.

2. The desire for control and reduction of EU immigration was a decisive factor in the referendum result of June 2016. Ipsos Mori found it to be by far the most important issue for voters just before they went to the polls, while most voters felt that Brexit would lead to a reduction in immigration (NatCen Social Research).

3. However, the Prime Minister has now implied that the UK's future migration system will be a matter for negotiation with the EU. Independent states do not normally negotiate major aspects of their immigration policies with other states.

4. There are a number of aspects where ease of access is important to both sides and where negotiation is hardly necessary – for example ease of access for tourists, visitors and business visitors. It would be sufficient in these cases to agree on visa free access. Something similar would be needed for students.

i) Ease of movement for visitors and the self-sufficient – The immigration system should be as light touch as possible for the 35 million passengers who arrive each year from the EU. Visitors would be admitted for a period of several months and would not normally need to have their passports stamped. Tourists from the EU would fall under arrangements similar to those for visitors with no limitations on numbers. Business visitors would be allowed entry without restriction.

ii) Improvements to border technology after Brexit - There would need to be discussion of both UK and EU plans for future border controls. Home Secretary Amber Rudd confirmed earlier this year that the UK government is considering new electronic pre-clearance processes. For its part the EU is planning to introduce, by 2020, a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) for non-visa nationals and fingerprint and photograph checks on all arriving passengers (the Entry-Exit System). Whether either EU system would apply to British citizens travelling to EU countries after Brexit will depend on the negotiations. If ETIAS and the EES were applied to British nationals in future, the UK government would have the option of reciprocating.

iii) Preserving access in both directions for students – Nearly 40,000 people arrived from the EU for the purpose of 'formal study' in the year to September 2017. In the interests of maintaining

our cultural and historical links with Europe, it would be in the interests of all parties if the current system of unhindered movement between the EU and UK for study should be retained after Brexit. EU students would be free to come and study but, if they wished to stay on and work, they would need a permit. Ideally, existing schemes such as Erasmus would continue largely unaffected.

5. The key issue, however, is migration for work. We have proposed that EU workers be incorporated into the existing UK work permit scheme. This would have a major impact in reducing the numbers since those in lower-skilled jobs comprise nearly 80% of arrivals over the last decade.

6. The government will no doubt consider whether or not it would be appropriate to set a cap on the number of highly-skilled EU work permits issued each year (see our [paper](#)).

7. In this context, a number of EU member states, including Austria, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and Latvia – apply various types of annual quota on non-EU migration.

8. In addition, the EU should, in principle, have no grounds for objecting to UK arrangements focused on attracting highly skilled workers since their flagship Blue Card scheme does just that (see our paper, [‘Arrangements for skilled Britons seeking to work in the European Union after Brexit’](#), April 2017).

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